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number 5

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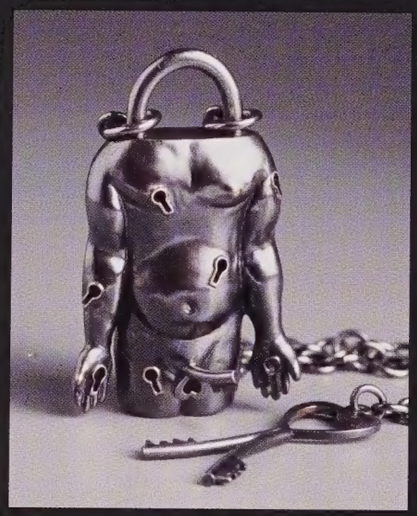
JEWELRY



NOVEMBER EXHIBITION

KEITH LEWIS
"UNCOVER"

JEWELRY

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"SHADOW OF MEMORY"
GROUP SHOW

JEWELRY

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Gold, Jade

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NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1999

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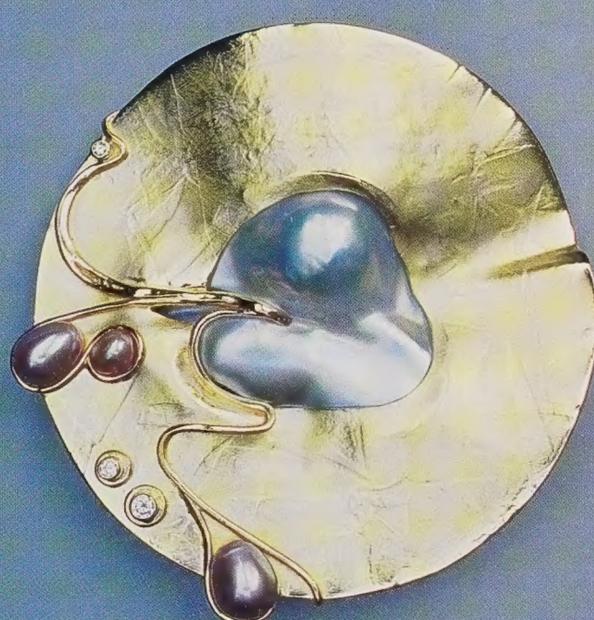

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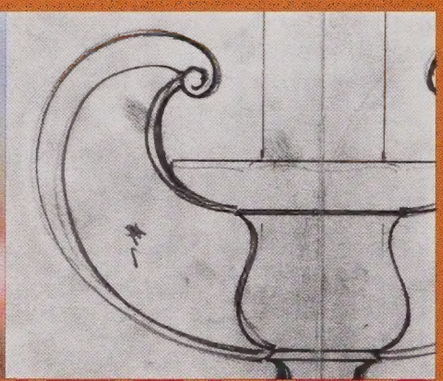

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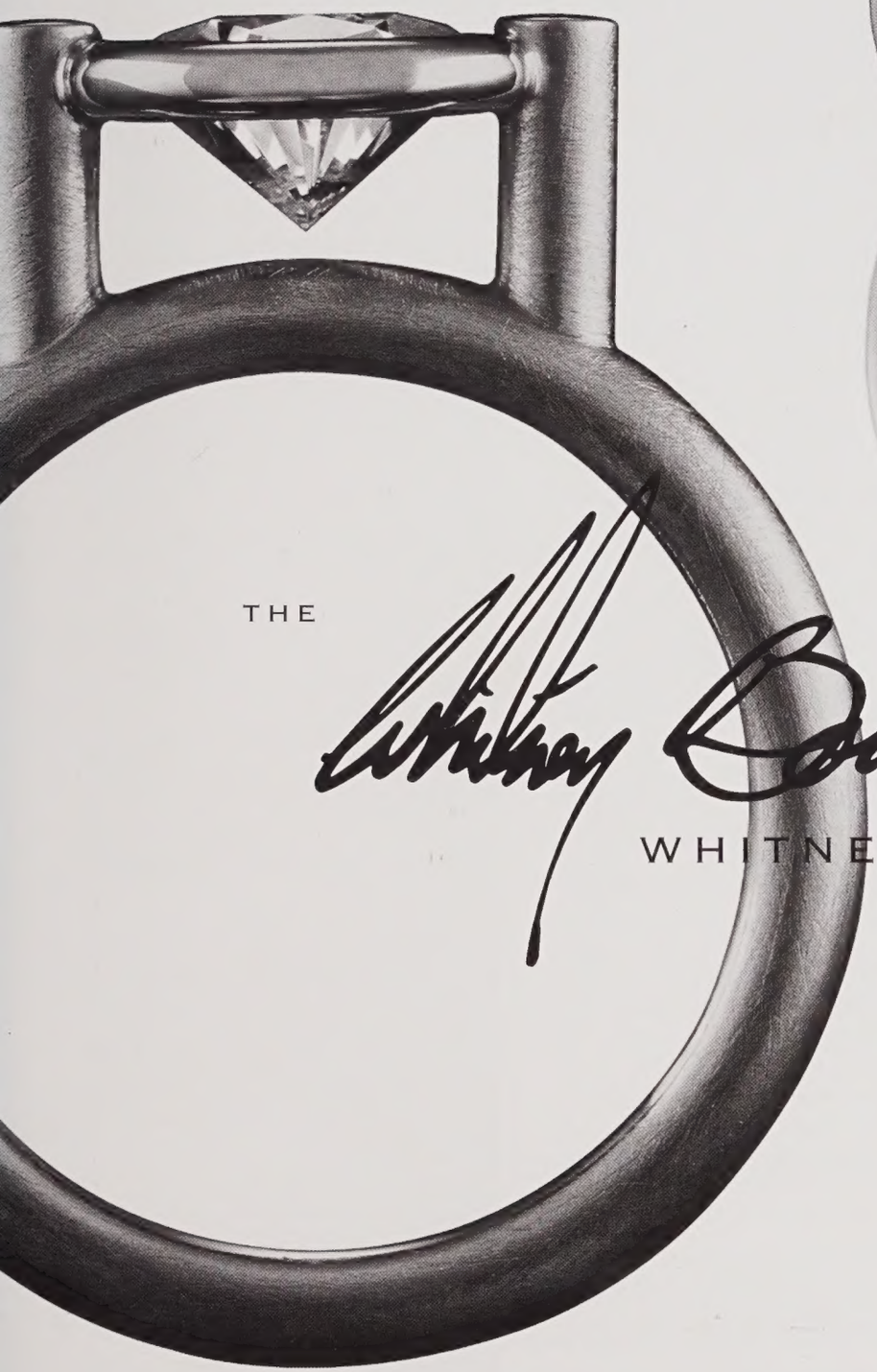
cover
Lin Stanionis
Mystic Interchange (detail), 1998
lead over steel, sterling, bronze, encaustic
24 x 3"
Photograph by Jim Freeman

top left
Lin Stanionis
Loving Cup, 1995
nickel, sterling, 24k gilt
12 x 9 x 6"
Photograph by Jon Blumb

top center
Francesc Peich
Sea Horse (desk watch), 1996
sterling, 14k, ruby
3 3/4 x 3/16 x 2 1/4"

top right
Kalo Workshop
Candle Holder with Large Handles
Sketch from Kalo Shop Collection
Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society



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FROM THE EDITOR

FRANK LEWIS

After more than twenty years of teaching, one gets used to seeing fads come and go. Particular modish variations seem to have a staying power, while others fade even more quickly than the various dyes which colored my students' hair just a few years back. What is interesting to me, and maybe relevant to this magazine's readers, is the amount of energy devoted to jewelry and body adornment. For my generation, such decoration consisted of love beads, liquid silver necklaces, and Native American jewelry, while for the present generation, there seems to be a plethora of piercings, henna patterns, and tattoos. But regardless of the forms which such adornments assume and their locations on the body, it is clear that modern youth spends a significant amount of their time dealing with body adornment.

Some years ago, in this magazine, Keith Lewis challenged metalsmiths to consider the potential of piercing and tattooing as an area of investigation and interest. At the time, I think that many considered tattoos and piercing as a fringe activity practiced by motorcycle gangs and other socially marginalized groups. Today, however, it seems that Mr. Lewis was prescient. Evading, for a moment, the ethical and cultural quandary of whether permanent scarification is a wise decision--you try talking to your nineteen-year-old son about his choice to spend his birthday funds on a tattoo--the interest in such elemental forms of adornment should cause all of us to be both excited and energized.

Not only does this revival of ancient methods of decoration offer an opportunity for the investigation of forms and materials which have long been banished from the canon of Western adornment, it also presents new opportunities for jewelers to collaborate with their patrons, and to re-think the meanings and symbolic powers of jewelry. For those of populist leanings, it offers opportunities to reach a whole new audience while they are young and impressionable. (That pierced undergraduate of today may be the next Internet billionaire of tomorrow looking for an engagement ring or a silver service.) I have had many students in metals who have helped to finance their education by working with their friends in designing studs, posts, and totemic rings and hoops.

Traditionalists and academics may scoff at such activities. After all, would not that student's time be better spent at the bench raising and filing? But think for a moment how that early interaction with patrons broadens the student's outlook, informing him or her as to how the more general public perceives jewelry and metalwork. What might we learn from a customer who discusses why they prefer a stud or an eyebrow hoop to a ring or a bracelet?

I am not advocating a rejection of past forms and their lasting value, but rather suggesting that we are in a cultural moment which may well have something to teach us. If nothing else, there is no harm to repeatedly engage in a consideration of jewelry's and metalwork's relevance to our contemporary society. M

FCL

METALSMITH

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designers and metalsmiths

Editor Frank C. Lewis
Graphic Design Catherine Jacobi, Ted Studios, Inc.
Copy Editor Sarah Sharpe
Technical Editor John Cogswell
Production Coordinator Dana Singer
Contributing Editor Bruce Metcalf

Officers, Board of Directors, and Committees of SNAG
President Donald Friedlich
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Executive Director
Dana Singer
2275 Amigo Drive
Missoula, Montana 59808
(406) 728 -5248 FAX (406) 728-2729
DSinger@SNAGmetalsmith.org

Advertising
Susan Evans, Metalsmith Advertising Director
279 Mangels Avenue
San Francisco, California 94131
(415) 333-5970 FAX (415) 333-2976 susanke@ibm.net

Editorial Materials
Frank C. Lewis, Editor
Metalsmith
2755 North Murray Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211
(414) 332-6375

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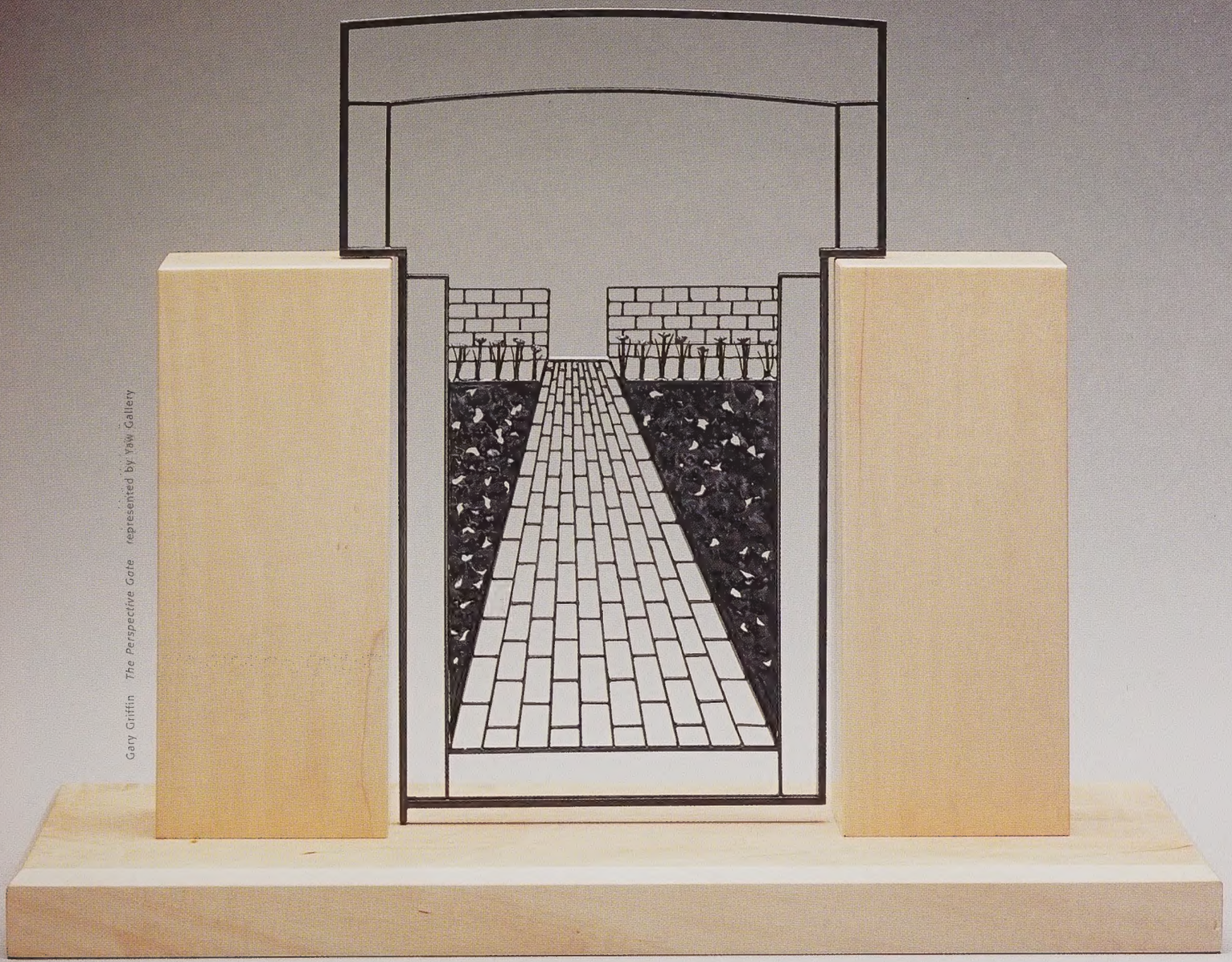

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Charles Crowley:
A Viable Career in Metalsmithing ◉ Alternatives to Jewelry & Teaching

Arthur Ganson:
Own Work

Kristina Logan:
Glass in Jewelry

Bruce Metcalf:
The Hand ◉ At the Heart of Craft

Pier Voulkos:
Own Work

J. Fred Woell:
Own Work

Joe Wood:
Work & Inspiration in Progress

Exhibitions:

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Conference Fee:

Members: $190
Non-Members: $255
Student Members: $125
Student Non-Members: $175
Day Passes: $95

To avoid a late registration fee, the conference fees must be postmarked by February 8, 2000. Late registrants must pay a non-refundable fee of $35.

Cancellation Policy:

If you cancel up through February 21, 2000, your money will be refunded minus a $35 cancellation fee. After February 21, there will be a $95 cancellation fee.

Air & Travel Arrangements:

For information on special SNAG discount travel rates call Leaders in Travel, Natalie Schwartz, 800-327-5947 ext. 118 or press "0" and ask for the SNAG agent.

SNAG members and subscribers to METALSMITH will receive a conference brochure in Fall 1999. Foreign members may request a brochure by calling Jeanette Helfrich, **630-579-3272.**

If you have any questions about registration please call, Jeanette Helfrich or Liz Lenard at 630-579-3272.

If you have any questions about the conference please call: Beth Ann Gerstein at **617-266-1810** or Claire Sanford at **978-282-9531**, conference co-chairs or Paulette Werger at **603-433-0306**, conference coordinator.

All information is subject to change without notice.

METALSMITH

EXHIBITION IN PRINT 2000

Call for Entries

Metalsmith, the award-winning publication of the Society of North American Goldsmiths (SNAG), the organization for jewelers, designers, and metalsmiths, is soliciting slides of recent work of metalsmithing and jewelry to be juried for inclusion in its annual Fall publication, *Exhibition in Print 2000*. Artists whose works are selected for the *Exhibition in Print* will also be invited to participate in a parallel exhibition at SOFA Chicago in November 2000 (Sculpture, Objects and Functional Art).

Approximately 40 artists will be selected for the publication, which will include four-color reproductions of artists' works, statements and biographical information, and a critical essay written by noted writer and critic Lucy Lippard. Lucy Lippard is one of America's most provocative and influential writers, curators and art activists. For over thirty years, she has contributed criticism and commentary to publications such as *The Village Voice* and *Art in America,* as well as had 18 books published, most recently, THE PINK GLASS SWAN: SELECTED FEMINIST ESSAYS ON ART (The New Press). In April 1999, she received the 1999 Award for Distinguished Service to the Visual Arts from ArTable, the national professional organization of women leaders in the visual arts.

All jewelers, designers and metalsmiths, including students, are eligible and encouraged to apply and need not reside in the United States. All work must be original and produced within the last two years (1998 or later). Artists featured in the 1998 juried *Exhibition in Print* are *not* eligible to enter the 2000 competition.

The entry fee, payable to SNAG in U.S. funds, is $20 for SNAG members and $30 for non-members. To become a member of SNAG, please see the entry form.

All slides submitted will be retained by *Metalsmith* and SNAG for archival, research and educational purposes, and as a resource for the editorial staff of *Metalsmith*.

The submission of a signed entry form will indicate your permission for *Metalsmith* and/or SNAG to retain, duplicate, and publish images of your work, and your agreement to the terms and conditions set forth in this prospectus.

Applicants are encouraged, but not required, to apply with images that have not been widely circulated or published in *Metalsmith* or other publications.

Please share this prospectus and entry form, all forms may be duplicated.

To obtain additional entry forms or membership information, send SASE to:

Exhibition in Print 2000
SNAG Business Office
710 East Ogden Ave., Suite 600
Naperville, Illinois 60563-8603

WHAT TO SUBMIT

The exhibition will be juried from 35mm color slides. Each artist must submit 5 slides. (Detail slides are acceptable but the total number of slides submitted, including details, must equal 5.) Slides should be of professional quality and mounted in standard cardboard or plastic, free from loose labels or tape.

Each slide should be labeled with the following:

- artist's name
- title of work
- dimensions of work (height x width x depth) in inches,
- materials
- year of completion
- an "up" arrow in the top right hand corner on the front side

The slides should be clearly numbered to correspond to information supplied on the entry form. During the jurying all five slides will be projected simultaneously.

CATEGORIES

architectural works
blacksmithing
enamel
flatware
furniture
hollowware
housewares
installation and site-specific works
jewelry: one-of-a-kind
jewelry: production
jewelry: precious (primarily precious metals and gems)
liturgical objects
multiple categories
sculpture
other

In the space provided on the entry form, specify the category at left which best describes the work you are submitting. Only one category may be selected. For example, if you enter a series of one-of-a-kind enamel brooches, you should apply under either "enamel" or "one-of-a-kind jewelry." If, however, you choose to apply with work that falls into more than one category (e.g., two brooches and three teapots), you may apply under the heading "multiple categories." These categories are for jurying purposes only, and every category may not be represented in the publication.

Please include a one-page resume and an artist's statement of no more than 100 words typed. Statements may be printed in the publication, but only those statements of 100 words or less. Your statement should relate to the work shown in your slides. Statements may be read at the request of the jury.

Entries must be postmarked by Monday, January 31, 2000.

Include a stamped, self-addressed standard (#10) envelope for purposes of notification. Incomplete or non-conforming entries will not be considered. Entry materials will not be returned.

Notifications will be mailed by April 30, 2000. Phone calls regarding the status of entries will not be accepted.

JURORS

Jurors for the *Exhibition in Print 2000* were chosen to represent the wide range of professional and conceptual positions in the field of contemporary metalwork.

RAMONA SOLBERG is Professor Emeritus of Art, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Fondly known as the "Mother of the Seattle School" of jewelry design, she is the author of INVENTIVE JEWELRY-MAKING and co-producer of several films on designing with everyday materials.

RACHELLE THIEWES is Professor of Art, University of Texas at El Paso. Her kinetic jewelry is in collections in the American Craft Museum and the Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. She has received several grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

THOMAS HERMAN is a goldsmith and the owner of Seven Fingers Jewelry. He is a frequent exhibitor at fine craft shows and is noted for his accomplished gold carving and creative use of gemstones.

ENTRY FORM

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Country: _____

Telephone: day (_____) _____ - _____ evening (_____) _____ - _____

e-mail: _____

Entry Category: _____

Categories:

architectural works
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enamel
flatware
furniture
hollowware
housewares
installation and site-specific works
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jewelry: production
jewelry: precious
(primarily precious metals and gems)
liturgical objects
multiple categories
sculpture
other _____

Checklist: Incomplete entries will not be accepted

_____ Five labeled and numbered slides
_____ Completely filled out and signed entry form
_____ 100-word maximum typed artist's statement
_____ One-page resume
_____ Self-addressed #10 envelope, stamped if you are a U.S. resident

_____ Entry fee payable to SNAG, in U.S. funds

(check one category)

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Calendar:

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April 30, 2000	Notifications mailed
Fall 2000	*Exhibition in Print 2000* is mailed and available on newsstands

SLIDE DESCRIPTIONS **Please print or type**

SLIDE 1

Title:

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.):

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Materials:

Date : Photographer:

SLIDE 2

Title:

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.):

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Materials:

Date : Photographer:

SLIDE 3

Title:

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.):

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Materials:

Date : Photographer:

SLIDE 4

Title:

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.):

Dimensions in inches H: W: D:

Materials:

Date : Photographer:

SLIDE 5

Title:

Object (i.e., teapot, bracelet, etc.):

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Materials:

Date : Photographer:

It is suggested you keep a photocopy of the signed and completed entry form for your records.

I grant *Metalsmith* and SNAG the right to retain, publish and duplicate any and all slides submitted herewith. I agree to all conditions of this prospectus.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

photo: Circle Chang

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RECENT SIGHTINGS PLAYING THE SPIRITUAL CARD

BRUCE METCALF

"THE FUGITIVE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH MEANS THAT ALL ITS APPEARANCES ARE DECEPTIVE."

PETER WASHINGTON, *MADAME BLAVATSKY'S BABOON*

It is widely remarked that people in late-industrial cultures feel alienated from the material world of MTV, Barbie dolls, and shopping malls. Thousands have been dissatisfied with the way that Capitalism, Church, and State answer the basic questions: Why are we here? What does this life mean? Is there something greater than we? Not finding answers in society's mainstream, people search for alternatives.

Starting in the middle of the 19th century, people have looked outside the Christian church for a more immediate religious experience. One of the alternatives has been a broad amalgam of Buddhist, Hindu, and Islamic wisdom, which now is called spiritualism. The movement--if it is a movement at all --has taken many forms, from spirit mediums and Kirlian photography, to Scientology and hipster Zen. They all make similar assumptions: that there is a force greater than we; that one can apprehend this force intuitively and personally, and that there is a secret knowledge of how to do so.

The United States, being a bastion of democracy, has proposed many forms of do-it-yourself spiritualism. Not surprisingly, the crafts have been pulled into this burgeoning trend. Any number of craftspeople claim that their work is a manifestation of their spiritual quest. There's Mark Lindquist in wood turning, Colette in enameling, or Paulus Berenson in ceramics. These artists claim that working in their crafts allows them access to a transcendent realm more pure than the physical world. Most will also imply that the objects they create are charged with other-worldly energy.

When I hear people making such claims, I say (sarcastically) that they are playing the spiritual card. The problem with playing the spiritual card is that: it's difficult to tell when the dealer is bluffing.

It's the same problem that has afflicted spiritualism since its beginnings. How can anybody know that it's authentic? There's no visible difference between having a spiritual experience and just saying so. This is why the history of spiritualism is full of fakes, many of whom gathered acolytes by sheer charisma and force of character, often even after their lies and ruses were exposed. I have no doubt that craft has attracted the same kinds of fakes and frauds.

To illustrate my skepticism, I'll tell two stories about well-known ceramists from Philadelphia. The first, whom I will call "*B*," speaks frequently about the spiritual content of his work. He's a devout Christian, and he taught for a long time in a major art school. He says that the true goal of art is spiritual

awakening. He's very popular in the Philadelphia area. Many people agree with him, and he has a loyal following of former students.

A few years ago, I learned about another side of *B*. During the 1970s, a member of the junior faculty in *B*'s ceramics program was a homosexual. When the younger man came up for tenure, *B* colluded with other senior faculty to make sure that tenure was denied. The junior faculty found a note written in Mr. Spiritual's handwriting in a wastebasket, saying something like, "Let's get this faggot." And they did. The gay man was denied tenure, and it took him nearly a decade to find another full-time teaching position.

Christianity is supposed to teach forgiveness dictating that no believer should cast the first stone. And yet, here was a man who publicly declared his own spirituality, but who privately practiced a genteel but vicious form of gay-bashing. Hidden from public view, *B* revealed his true colors. He showed his bigotry, not his aspiration to a higher plane. As far as I'm concerned, *B* proved he was a fraud, a windbag, and a hypocrite.

But there's another ceramist in Philadelphia, Rudi Staffel, whom I find much more convincing. Staffel makes smallish porcelain pots that he calls "Light Gatherers." When these pots are illuminated properly, the thin walls glow. Staffel has also studied Buddhism most of his life.

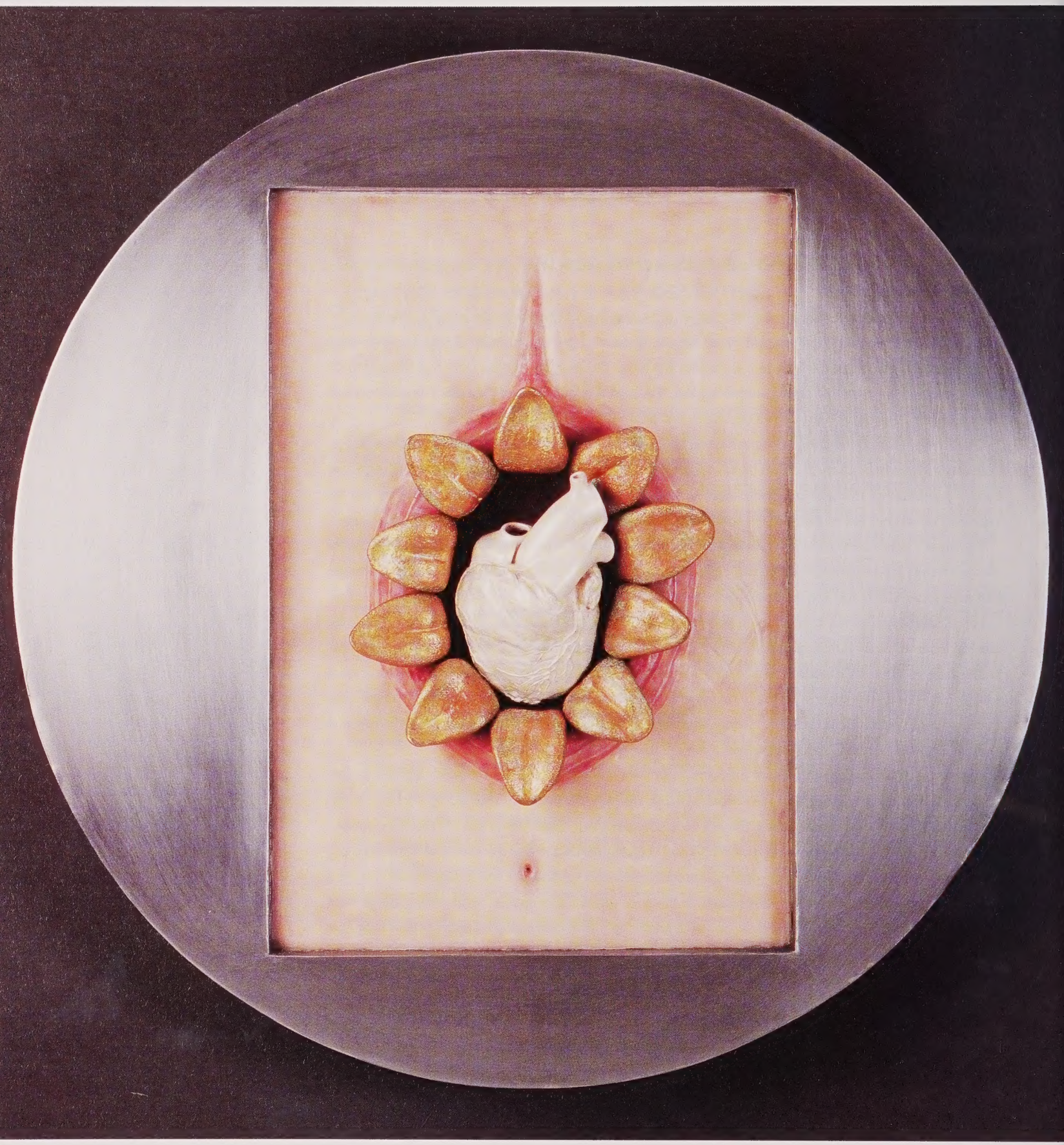
I once saw Staffel give a speech about his work to a small group of students. Staffel started his talk by passing a pan of bean sprouts around. Everyone was mystified, but they each ate a mouthful of sprouts. Staffel then said that it's important to take care of your body, because if you're not healthy, you can't work well. For the rest of the speech, he made no mention of his knowledge of Buddhism, nor did he make any claim about the spiritual content of his work. Afterwards, a student asked him if the light in his pots was a metaphor for the spiritual. Staffel answered in the affirmative and said no more.

Zen teaches that true enlightenment makes no claims and attracts no attention to itself. Staffel's performance was entirely consistent with the precepts of Zen wisdom. He modestly showed his concern for his students, but he claimed nothing. Even though I could be deceived, Staffel looks like the real thing to me.

These two stories clarify the problem with playing the spiritual card. First, the evidence offered by the work itself is inconclusive. There's no visible difference between a spiritual pot and an unspiritual one. As a result, any claim the artist makes is unprovable. In the end, authentically spiritual work must emerge from an authentically spiritual person. But how are we to know the truth? Only rarely do people show their true natures. Generally, nobody will ever know how truly spiritual another person is.

That's why I'm always skeptical of declarations of spirituality. As far as I can tell, the truly spiritual never advertise. Those who do... well, I usually figure it's just advertising. M

Bruce Metcalf is a studio jeweler and writer on craft issues. He lives near Philadelphia.



above
Mystic Interchange, 1998
lead over steel, sterling, bronze, encaustic
24 x 3"
Photograph by Jim Freeman

TEXT BY GLEN R. BROWN

Confrontation with religious paraphernalia and the peculiarities of orthodox ritual provokes from most agnostics only a more profound skepticism. Less frequently, it compels an examination of beliefs that actually leads to conversion. Perhaps, under the rarest of all circumstances, it engenders what might be called a second-order veneration, a solemn respect or even reverence-- not for the specific divinity or supernatural entities to which such objects and practices refer, but rather for the intense human conviction with which they are fused: the raw energy of faith. For one who reflects on faith in this abstract form, detached from the particulars of religion or philosophical systems, it appears so manifestly a part of human nature that its absence would almost seem to constitute a pathology, a kind of fall from human grace. From this perspective, faith becomes its own object. Rather than projecting itself onto an exterior deity, it is reflexive, constituting an unshakable belief in the power of belief itself.

LIN STANIONIS: EROS AND PIOUS CANNIBALISM

For Lin Stanionis's journey from agnosticism to faith in faith itself, a catalyst was provided by the ecclesiastical regalia and ritual of the Orthodox Church, to which her father's Eastern European relatives demonstrated such profound devotion that they were never fully able to assimilate themselves into American culture. "They're the kind of Catholics who completely accept the mystical side of religion," she explains. "One of my great aunts devoted her life to the Virgin Mary. She didn't become a nun, but that was her life, and it affected the way she responded to things. I remember that once, when she was suffering from a toothache, she took a match and burned all around her lips. I guess it was a sort of transference of pain. I'm not sure of exactly what she was thinking about, but to her it was a perfectly normal thing to do." Intrigued by the exoticism of this kind of devotion, Stanionis sought to understand it better, not by personal conversion, but rather by exploration of the symbols and practices through which it was professed. Above all, she was fascinated by the mysticism and rituals surrounding the human body in Catholicism, especially as they touched upon the subliminal but profoundly evocative themes of Eros and cannibalism.

The hollowware that Stanionis produced in the early 1980s, soon after completing her MFA at Indiana University, initiated her exploration of the curious relationship among ritual, ingestion, and the erotic. At first, her work focused less on actual religious accouterments and practices than on the simple employment of functional objects in a prescribed and repetitive fashion, as in the use of tableware under the guidance of etiquette. Intuiting in the act of eating a kind of mantric rhythm, as well as an obvious sensual indulgence, she envisioned objects that would illuminate the deep connections among spiritual

above
Ascension, 1999
lead, encaustic, bronze
24 x 24 x 3"
Photograph by Jim Nedresky

above
Ascension (detail), 1999
lead, encaustic, bronze
24 x 24 x 3"
Photograph by Jim Nedresky

desire, sexual appetite, and physical hunger. The earliest of Stanionis's works are organically shaped liqueur cups with bulbous bowls and thin stems that resemble jointed insect legs or wriggling snake bodies. The libidinal pulse of these cups is echoed in a 1993 pair of sterling silver and lacquered-wood salad servers, in which snake bodies, tongues, and phallic forms merge in biomorphic abstraction.

In the mid-1990s, Stanionis's work took a decided shift away from the literal aspects of function and toward a heightened emphasis of the psychological resonance that utilitarian items might possess. "My early spoons were functional and only alluded to the erotic side of eating," she explains. "Then I thought that maybe I didn't want to just make allusions and should create a pair of flat-out erotic spoons—just make them to see what the difference was, to see if they could carry the same information and still be as interesting." The result is *Pair of Spoons*, 1995, a sculpture comprised of a set of utensils with constructed sheet-nickel handles and bowls of a matrix material painted with metallic automobile lacquer. To emphasize the non-functional nature of the ostensibly functional spoons, Stanionis made the bowls convex rather than concave; in order to evoke the erotic, she formed the matrix so that one spoon-bowl suggests a tongue while the other resembles female geni-

above
Untitled Vessel, 1997
bronze, sterling,
polymer clay, wax
18 x 5 x 3 1/2"
Photograph by Jim Nedresky

talia. The effect, as in many Surrealist objects, is the suggestion of unconscious desire projected onto a slice of quotidian reality.

Although references to the spiritual are less pronounced than the evocations of the erotic in Stanionis's non-functional spoons, at these early stages she had already begun to think about expanding the thematic possibilities of the forms she was using. Most important to her were the parallels between desire for contact with the transcendental and attempts to fathom the secrets of one's own viscera. "The inside of the body is so unknown," she comments. "It's this really mystifying thing that completely determines how you function—all of what's in there that you don't know about. It's really interesting to think about ways of accessing what's inside." Her attempt to access this unknown terrain in an intuitive or even kinesthetic fashion seemed to Stanionis to share some important characteristics with rituals involving union with the divine through symbolic forms of ingestion, and she soon found herself contemplating the Eucharist. "I was thinking about how to

make my objects more potent for the viewer," she explains. "I thought about different kinds of vessels, and somehow it seemed that a natural place to start was with the ceremonies and rituals of the Catholic religion."

Contempleting the idea of transubstantiation—the transformation of the sacramental wine and bread into the actual blood and body of Christ—and the consequent act of symbolic cannibalism in Holy Communion led Stanionis to make a fairly literal interpretation of these rituals titled *Loving Cup*, 1995. The satin-finished nickel vessel, featuring a foot and bowl raised through traditional silversmithing techniques and a four-sided constructed stem, makes a straightforward reference to the Eucharistic chalice. Simple in its contours, it presents an image of high serenity. Constructed as a double bowl with a rim extending inward, its interior is gold plated with an incised sunburst texture similar to those on some baroque monstrances. "I was trying to get the gold to glow," Stanionis explains. "The light reflects off and is thrown back up onto the heart." Cast as a hollow form in silver, the life-sized human heart—molded from a physician's anatomical model purchased at a flea market—sits loosely in the chalice like a kind of cocktail of strange fruit.

While *Loving Cup* literalizes the ingestion of the body of Christ, it maintains an interest in Eros as well, as the title suggests. That the sacred and the erotic can commingle in the Catholic tradition had already been confirmed by Stanionis's readings in hagiography. "I encountered a passage about a saint," she remembers, "who had visions of taking Christ's heart out of the wound on his side and then replacing it with her own. There was this real physical need to access Christ. I like the idea that there was a penetration--and that you could extrapolate from that a sexual kind of activity." For Stanionis, this extrapolation took into consideration ritualistic submission in Christian spirituality—a willing vulnerability—and its similarity to aspects of sexual relations. The critic Dave Hickey, whose writings have stimulated Stanionis's thinking along these lines, has taken the formula one step further by suggesting that these forms of submission share fundamental characteristics with individuals' accustomed manner of relating to works of art. "Simply put," Hickey asserts, "the rituals of 'aesthetic' submission in our culture speak a language so closely analogous to those of sexual and spiritual submission that they are all but indistinguishable when conflated in the same image."[1] Although Stanionis has since begun to explore the implications of this triad of submission, *Loving Cup* remains more specifically concerned with the confluence of spirituality and symbolic cannibalism.

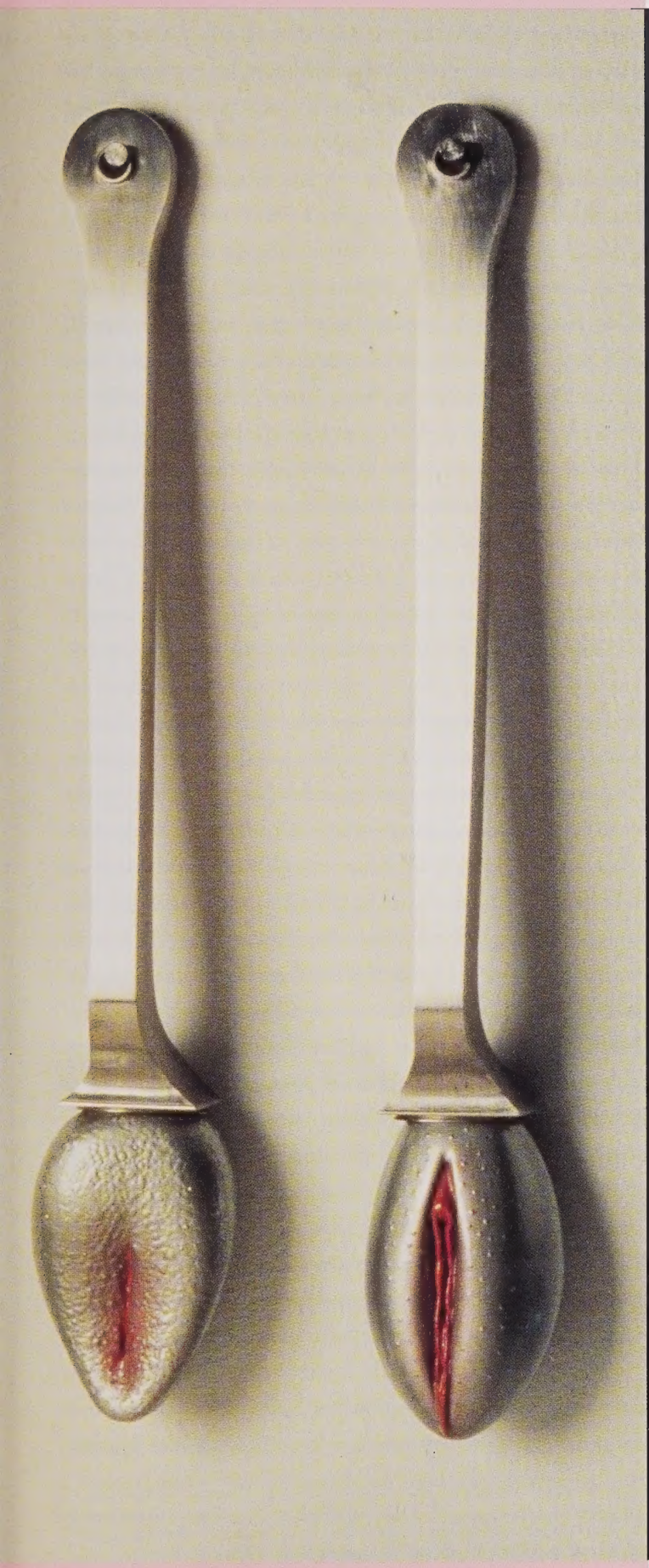
While the Eucharistic chalice was the most immediate influence on *Loving Cup*, Stanionis also recalls vague thoughts about Aztec stone bowls in which human hearts were offered as nourishment for the sun. Other vessels that, like the Eucharistic chalice, are associated with rituals of sacrifice and symbolic cannibalism include the huge, carved human-effigy serving bowls of the Native American potlatch ceremony, Tibetan skull cups, and the ceremonial spoons and bowls produced by many African tribal societies. For Stanionis, the great number of similar rituals and ceremonial paraphernalia originating in so many disparate cultures suggested the operation of common predilections in the human mind. Thus, it is not surprising that her readings occasionally touch on psychoanalysis and depth psychology. Sigmund Freud, of course, offers one of the most memorable explanations for the conflux of cannibalism and spirituality in his hypothesis of primordial patricide, theorizing the consumption of the "violent primal father" as an act intended to appropriate the envied and feared aspects of the father's strength. Accordingly, ritualistic consumption relating to the "totemic meal" is to be interpreted as "a repetition and commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions and of *religion*."[2]

If *Loving Cup* is the product of an exploration of the relationship between spirituality and symbolic cannibalism, Stanionis's next major work seeks to investigate more fully the connections that she had intuited between spirituality and the erotic, particularly in relation to repression. In *Untitled Vessel*, 1996, allusions to the body's erogenous zones are interspersed with references to Catholic iconography, such as the Sacred Heart and the rosary. Stanionis—who has adorned her studio walls with devotional images that include a postcard depicting Santa Rita in prayer with a phallic nail pene-

above
Loving Cup, 1995
nickel, sterling, 24k gilt
12 x 9 x 6"
Photograph by Jon Blumb

opposite page left
Pair of Spoons, 1995
nickel, lacquer over resin
13 x 3 x 2 1/2"

opposite page right
Candlesticks, 1997
sterling, cast resin
13 x 2 3/4 x 2 1/2"
Photograph by Jim Nedresky



trating her forehead—is fascinated by the libidinal nature of the ecstatic states experienced by female saints. "The cloistered nuns in the Middle Ages had visions that were very erotic," she observes. "They were definitely sexually repressed." The invention of images, whether by artist or visionary, could hardly have remained untainted by this repression and its effects on the body ego. Critic Donald Kuspit has interpreted the "internal body image" paintings of the contemporary Austrian artist Maria Lassnig, who spent eighteen years in a convent school where she was forbidden to explore herself physically, as marks of her consequent inability to "objectify her body—to get a 'perspective' on it by learning its objective givenness through touch."[3] A rosary in which beads alluding to genitalia punctuate the "Our Fathers," Stanionis's *Untitled Vessel* seems both a comment on such alienation and a kind of cathexis. "My thinking was that, when you use a rosary, it's a meditative device," she explains. "You're reciting and meditating, but at the same time you're touching little body parts as you go along. What would you be thinking about, and where would that take you?"

Although *Untitled Vessel* is constructed like a rosary, it is actually larger and, in fact, is equally inspired by ancient erotic hanging oil lamps and other vessels. While Stanionis had previously used hearts cast from her physician's model as functional vessels, this form is less specific, combining references to a heart with characteristics of a tongue and foreskin. The piece is composed of bronze with a reddish purple patina and "valves" modeled in polymer the latter of which are also reminiscent of the flames on the Sacred Heart. The "foreskin," which Stanionis incorporated for its reference to "revealing something," was produced from a nylon stocking dipped in wax. Embracing the heart form is a ring of pine twigs cast in bronze with polymer tips baked to a state of translucency, a process that lends them the look of semi-precious stones or tiny points of light. This "crown of thorns," like the daggers that impale the heart of the *Mater Dolorosa*, manifests the idea of penetration, the leitmotif of spiritual and erotic ecstasy.

Continuing the strategy of teasing from ecclesiastical accouterments their latent erotic content, Stanionis's next major work is *Candlesticks*, 1997. The candle, a frequent *vanitas* symbol in Renaissance and baroque iconography, alludes not only to the brevity of life but also, more to the point, to the transience of pleasures of the flesh. In deference to the Catholic prohibition against the "spilling of seed" outside the context of procreation, Stanionis cast the sockets of her candlesticks as inverted snail shells that symbolize female genitalia. Consequently, the dripping of the burning candle would evoke the fulfillment of the requisites of physical union, the injunction to "be fruitful and multiply." Further references to insemination are carried into the columns of the candlesticks, which are cast in a waxed, slightly greenish resin whose bubbly interior resembles fish roe suspended in a thick fluid. Supporting these columns are silver bases, whose architectural form is reminiscent of the classical tempietto and which house tiny, pendulous biomorphic forms that Stanionis describes as "uvular." The concept of the body as the temple of the soul is thus made consonant with the image of the Word made flesh, and both are reconciled with the physical performance of the body when driven by the impulsive influence of the libido.

Stanionis, it should be remembered, is not a practicing Catholic, and her works neither affirm nor deny the validity of the Catholic ethos. By conjoining the supposed antitheses of body and spirit, she is attempting neither to demonstrate that Catholicism ultimately provides a balanced mediation between materialism and spirituality nor to deconstruct Catholicism as a theological privileging of the transcendental that cannot, in the end, overcome the material element at its very heart. Her interest remains focused on faith itself, and on the faculty of the mind that can conceive of concepts such as the material and the transcendental and ascribe to them values relative to the life of a human being. As a consequence, a shift away from specifically Catholic references in her work toward a broader exploration of faith was perhaps inevitable. Her most recent sculptures can be more closely associated with ideas derived from her readings on the rituals of Tibetan Buddhism.

The psychoanalyst Carl Jung provides an obvious prototype for Stanionis's comparative study of faith. He clearly identifies the distinction between Western spirituality, as embodied in the various

forms of Judeo-Christian belief, and Eastern forms of spirituality such as Buddhism–a contrast of monism and transcendentalism. "With us," Jung conjectured, "man is incommensurably small and the grace of God is everything; but in the East, man is God and he redeems himself."[4] For Stanionis, the most intriguing aspect of this divergence in thought is that it appears almost superficial when contrasted with the continuity in the relationship each region implies among spirituality, eroticism (auto-eroticism, in the case of monistic spirituality), and symbolic cannibalism. When viewed as a product of the psyche and its conflicting energies of libido and the death instinct, faith could hardly be free of these shadowy underpinnings, regardless of the cultural context in which it might reveal itself.

The first in her current series of work, Stanionis's relatively large, wall-mounted sculpture, *Mystic Interchange*, 1998, is an attempt to revisit, in the context of Tibetan Buddhism, the triad of spirituality, eroticism, and ritual ingestion that constitutes the focus of her earlier Catholic-inspired pieces. The sculpture is framed by a two-foot diameter hollow, circular form that Stanionis had specially fabricated in lead-coated steel. "This part of the piece is a reference to a mandala," she explains. "I was interested in the circle as a complete form, with one point in the center, and the way that the cosmos could be seen as an endless expansion and contraction from that point." Within the circle is a rectangle defined by an inset panel composed of sections of "blueboard" (sheets of home-insulation material) laminated together to form a block, which Stanionis then coated in tinted beeswax, giving it the texture and color of pale flesh. Representing a female pelvic region, the rectangular panel is a reference to a chakra, one of the six locations along the spine that are defined in yoga as sources of energy. The vulva, formed as a ring of cast-bronze human tongues, suggests a kind of defanged *vagina dentata*. This is an inversion of the Western image embodying castration anxiety, implying instead a caress, a motion of healing rather than severing. At the center of this lingual ring, which Stanionis has likened to a lotus, is a cast-silver heart.

A unifying work on a number of levels, *Mystic Interchange* merges Eros and spirituality under the theme of willing submission. "The mystic interchange I have in mind," Stanionis explains, "is one in which you open yourself up to be vulnerable, allowing a sort of exchange to happen. I wanted that vulnerability, and in a way I saw it as a sexual vulnerability. The heart is right there in a state of readiness, where you could access it." A third aspect of vulnerability is suggested through Stanionis's linking of the exposed heart to the ritual of the "sky burial," in which the corpse of a Tibetan monk is left in the open to be eviscerated and ingested by ravens. Physically the bones are picked clean; metaphorically, the body is re-absorbed–cannibalized–back into the larger whole of nature. Here the energies of Eros and Thanatos perform a provocative ritual of recycling that projects the psyche onto the cosmos in an endless play of birth, death, and rebirth.

For Stanionis, the mind's ability to enact this drama and to charge it simultaneously with the characteristics of both mystery and truth is evidence of the highest human faculty—the supreme power of faith. The degree to which the intangible properties of this faith can actually be embodied in material objects is, of course, difficult to assess—but then Stanionis is not setting out to make icons. She clearly does not expect to effect any conversions. At the same time, her own faith in faith is self-evident, and her work provides a more than sufficient starting point for the viewer's reflections upon his or her own power of belief. To attempt to provide more would be to slip into dogmatism; to attempt less would surely be tantamount to a kind of apostasy, and Stanionis is nothing if not devout. M

Glen R. Brown is an art historian at Kansas State University.

[1] Dave Hickey, "Nothing Like the Son," *The Invisible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty* (Los Angeles: Art Issues Press, 1993), 35.
[2] Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1913), *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. J. Strachey (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955), 13,142 [My emphasis].
[3] Donald Kuspit, "The Hospital of the Body: Maria Lassnig's Body Ego Portraits," *Signs of Psyche in Modern and Postmodern Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 206.
[4] Carl G. Jung, "Psychological Commentary on 'The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation,'" (1939), *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, eds. H. Read, M. Fordham, G. Adler, and W. McGuire (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), 11, 480.

left
Sea Horse (desk watch), 1996
sterling, 14k, ruby
3 3/4 x 3/16 x 2 1/4"

top right
Watch, 1996
sterling, 14k

bottom right
Watch, 1996
14k, waspaloy, steel

TREASURED TIMEPIECES BY FRANCESC PEICH

TRANSLATION BY JANET SANDOR

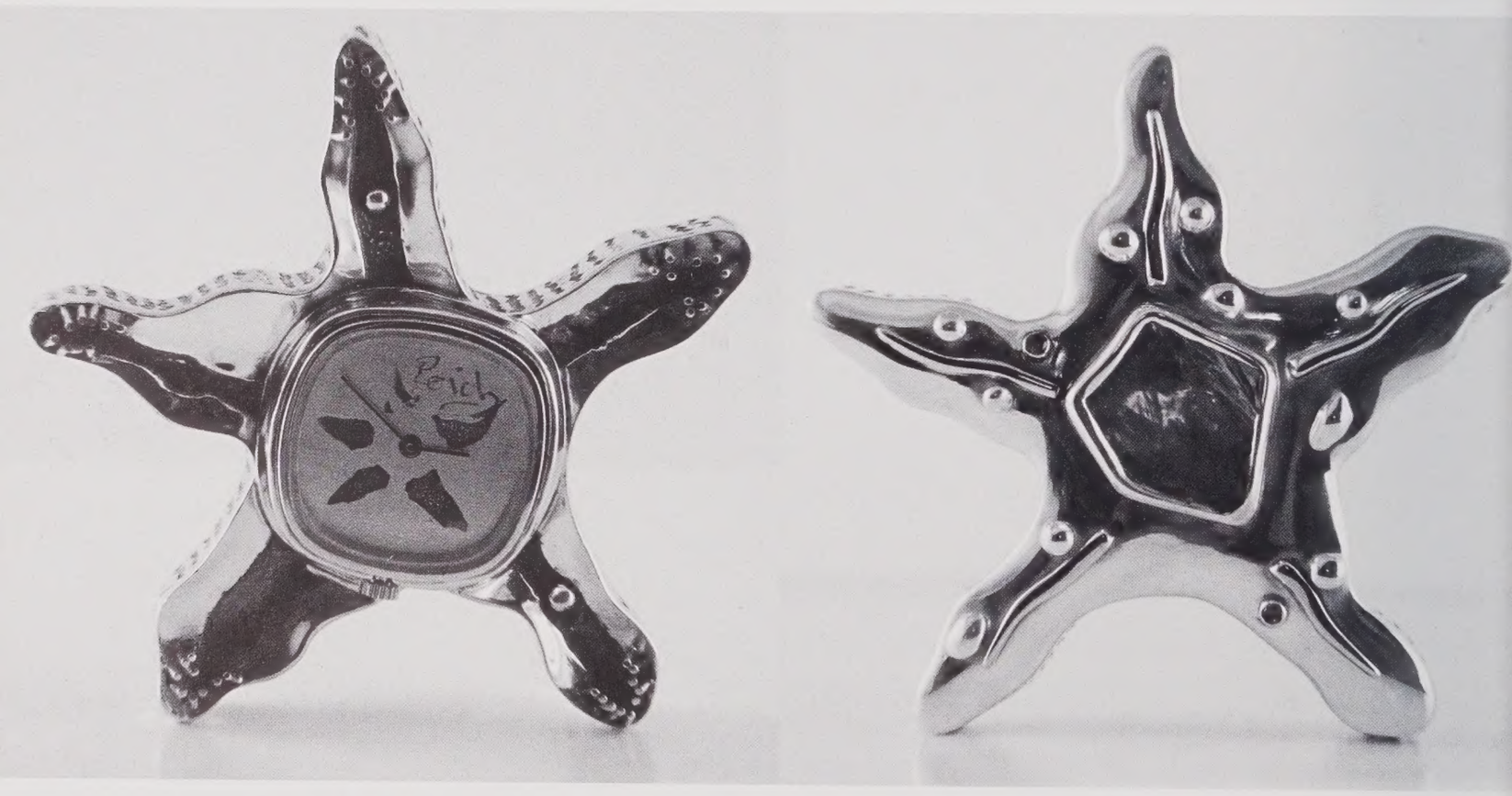
Shells—sea shells, nautilus, sea urchin, starfish and the sea inspire the jewelry, watches, and clocks that flow from Francesc Peich's inland workshop in Montreal, nearly 1,000 miles from the ocean. Jeweler, clock maker, and artist, Francesc Peich has made Canada's second largest city his home since 1983. Here, he hand crafts stunningly exotic jewelry that is contemporary, highly original, and appreciated for its beauty and rarity.

Born into a family of watchmakers in Barcelona, Spain, Peich spent his childhood surrounded by valuable clocks, watches, and jewelry brought to the family's shop for repairs, modification, or restoration. The family work- shop was renowned for the quality of its work, and as one of the few places that could produce historical and unavailable timepieces. Preferring to bypass years of study, Francesc Peich opted for joining the family business. He did

TEXT BY CHRISTINE VAUCHEL

leave home to study at Jaeger LeCoultre and Fabre-Leuva, the finest Swiss watchmakers at the time and suppliers to prestigious houses such as Piaget and Boucheron. Years of work in the family's Barcelona shop, punctuated with internships in Switzerland, allowed Peich to learn all the latest techniques of watch and jewelry making. Fate, however, had other plans. His father passed away, and Francesc took over the family business. Before assuming the responsibilities, he decided to travel. His itinerary took him to Africa, the United States, and South America, with a stop in Québec. While in Mexico and Arizona, he was intrigued by the jewelry-making techniques he saw that combined natural stone with precious gems and metals. Eventually, his head spinning with ideas and a love for Montreal, he decided to move and expand his professional horizons.

With the advent of quartz movements, watchmaking had become very industrial and left little room for creative work. The successful debut of the "Swatch" was followed by a bevy of clones, made in Asia and sold everywhere at a low cost. With his tools brought from Spain, Peich turned to jewelry making, creating a variety of rings, necklaces, and bracelets from simple materials that reflected popular tastes. He always continued his work as a clock maker, eventually restoring a fourteen-bell clock belonging to Montreal's McGill University. Researching and speaking with his colleagues, he realized that there was a nearly total absence of quality craftsmanship in watch and clock making. One hundred years ago, Cartier, Fabergé, and Boucheron designed and made unique pieces, usually commissioned by the wealthy–watches that were jewelry, worn as pendants, brooches, and necklaces, as well as clocks that were works of art. Owning such jewelry was a mark of distinction, a sign of one's rank in society. Nothing like this was being done in North America. A challenge had presented itself.

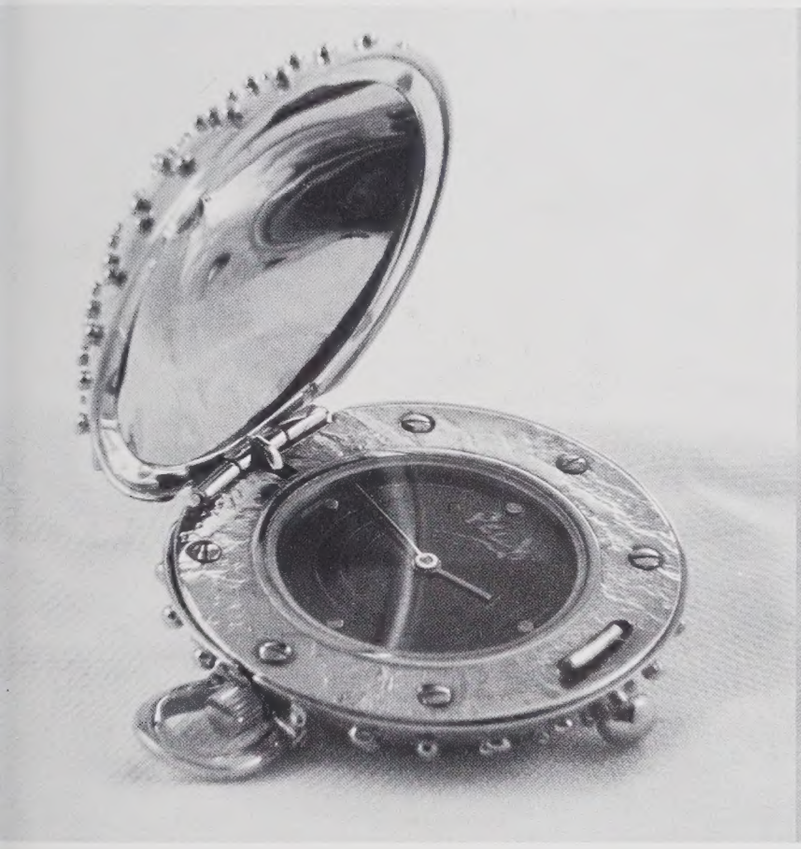


left
Starfish (desk watch), 1998
sterling, 14k, emeralds, mother-of-pearl
3 1/2 x 3 1/2"

right
Starfish (desk watch), 1998
sterling, 14k, emeralds, mother-of-pearl
3 1/2 x 3 1/2"

left
Sea Urchin (pocket watch), 1996
14k, sterling, steel, emeralds
3/4 x 2 x 7/8"

right
Sea Urchin (pocket watch), 1996
14k, sterling, steel, emeralds
3/4 x 2 x 7/8"



Attracted by form and beauty as much by the technical challenges, Peich decided to combine the two skills he had mastered, watch and jewelry making. In 1988, after two years of experimentation, he developed a line of watches that included both one-of-a-kinds and limited edition series, for which the mechanisms were harmoniously integrated into an overall contemporary design.

Building from the obligatory mechanical workings of the watches, Peich played with the exterior–the geometry of the case, the face, the design of the hands. The cases, normally round or rectangular, were stretched. They grew elliptical or triangular. They meandered and were studded with precious gems. The faces were polished, brushed, blackened, steel, or colored, or made of a natural stone with an appealing texture or color. Over the years, titanium and man-made materials supplemented Peich's arsenal of precious metals and steel.

above
Nautilus (desk watch), 1997
sterling, 14k, Quebec jade, sapphires
5 x 3 x 1 5/8"

above
Nautilus (desk watch), 1997
Sterling, 14k, Quebec jade, sapphires
5 x 3 x 1 5/8"

Experimentation and happenstance led to new discoveries, which were added to a repertoire that included new techniques of dyeing titanium and silkscreening dials. Peich was able to achieve what he had always dreamed of doing, working metal to create the perfect piece of jewelry; to control every stage of manufacture while giving free reign to his imagination. He sculpted the exterior shape and integrated stones using the techniques he learned in his travels: the perfect balance of form, content, metal, stone, color, and light.

Peich divides his time among his craft, teaching, conferences, exhibitions, and research. It was while digging through old books that he became aware of the granulation used by Etruscan jewelers in the 8th century BCE. Through much experimentation, he developed his own granulation technique, which he now uses to adorns some his pieces. Inspired by an sea urchin's shell, Peich recently created a dazzling pocket watch with an emerald encrusted gold case that opens to reveal a delicate watch movement mounted onto a steel face. Once closed, the watch becomes a shell with minuscule granulations of such perfectly balanced design that simply holding and looking at it evokes physical pleasure.

Once he mastered the granulation technique, Peich spent several months trying to solve another puzzling problem. He wanted to create a spiral piece of jewelry in which the dimensions followed Fibonnaci's Sequence, an arithmetic series in which each number is the sum of the two previous numbers. Mirroring the cross section of a nautilus shell, the table-top clock is a silver spiral with a .25mm thick jadite face that supports the movement. The choice of this finely veined green stone required delicate calculations. Cutting it too thin would render the piece fragile, and it could break when the movement was attached. A number of trials was necessary to achieve the ideal thickness, one that was light, yet sufficiently solid. Resting on three delicately turned feet, *Nautilus* is a piece of art. All curves and arches, the nautilus clock was specifically designed for an exhibit of works on the theme of the river by Québec's Oscar-winning animated filmmaker, Frédérick Back. Peich's most recent creation–an all-silver, starfish-inspired table-top clock–was shown in December 1998 in Montreal, after it was selected for the Racine Award of the Grand Prix des Métiers d'Art du Québec.

For several years now, Peich's work has been built around a theme, one that is very dear to him–the sea. The images and sensations of his Mediterranean childhood flow through his creations. His jewelry is inspired by marine life, the light of the Mediterranean, shapes, and colors, all reminders of happy times. "I am not a tortured artist," claims Peich. "My creations come from my childhood memories of days spent collecting sea shells under the sun, a strong feeling of the intense life of the sea. I miss it. The St. Lawrence River is just not the same."

His recent works shows the sea's influence on Peich. Among his recent pieces is an an elegant, yet understated, wristwatch. The oval case is silver with a blackened steel face set off by the rare woods of the bracelet (wenga and amaranth), which is linked with silver. The delicate twists of silver evoke

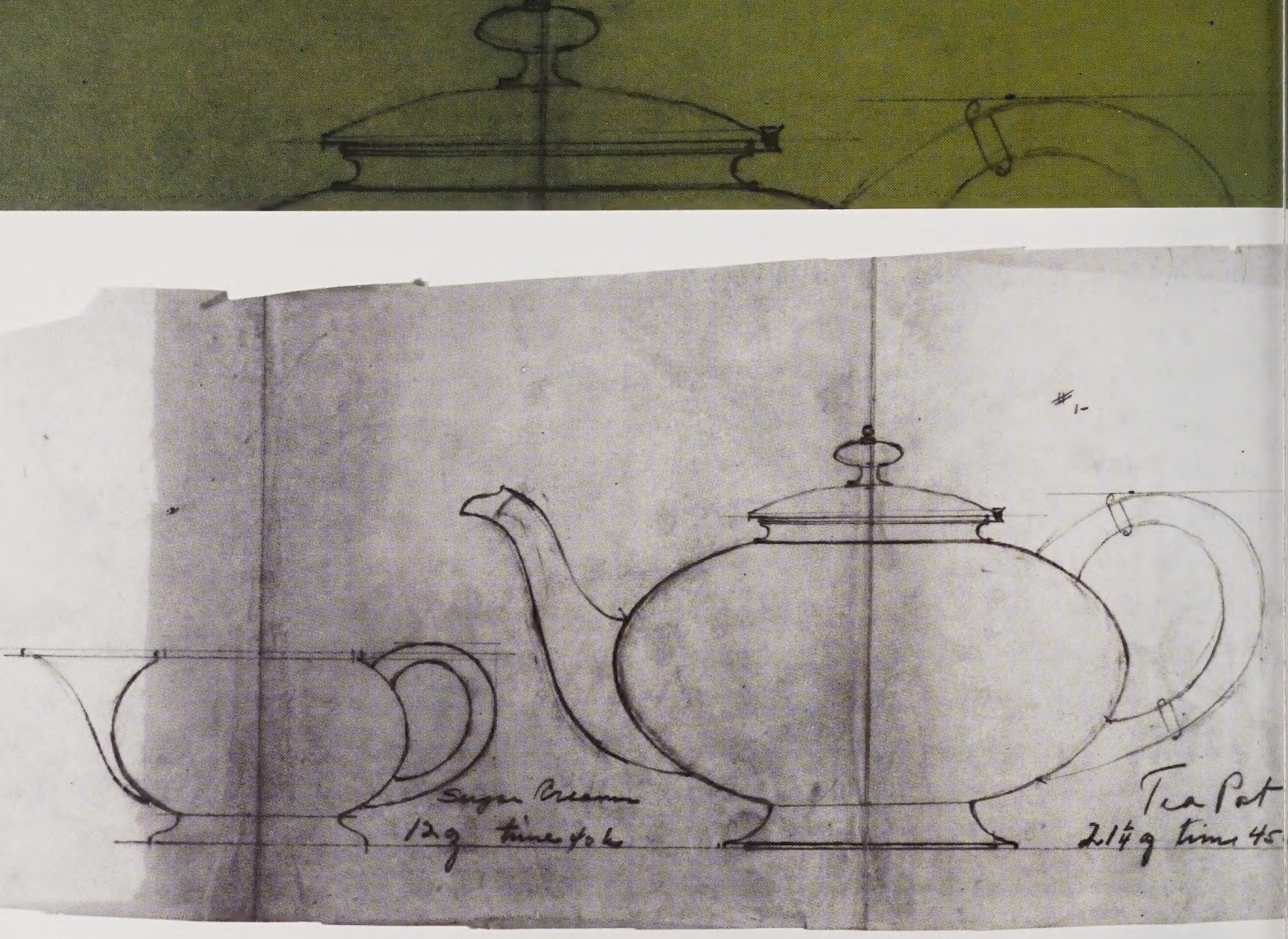
minute sea shells. A bluish wave breaks on the brushed silver face of another watch with a rectangular case. A starfish frozen in a silver block decorates a third one with a titanium face. The sea, always the sea, is invoked in discrete, refined touches. The bracelets of the watches may be either heavy or delicate chains. They, too, are specially designed, carved from wood or metal, and contributing to the overall balance of each piece.

Continuing his marine explorations, Peich is currently working on a limited series of exclusive jewelry pieces. Starting from models in brass or silver, he experiments until he obtains the exact image he has in his head, such as a tree-like piece of coral, a sea horse, shells, or anemones. The basic elements, including clasps and closures, are created using the lost-wax method. Once removed from the molds, they are polished and set with stones before being assembled. The dazzling jewelry comes to life: a school of fish swim by on a silver, Egyptian-style necklace; or a row of seashells bob on a bracelet, also in silver. Then there are the brooches: a graceful stingray in white and yellow gold set with blue sapphires and diamonds; and a starfish, also in two-tone gold, cradling a second star with its delicate gold tentacles dusted with diamonds. Two little limpets of grooved silver, tiny shellfish that cling to rocks, are ready to be made into earrings. Presented in carved oak boxes that are sculpted to match the shape of the pieces, these treasures from the sea will be part of Peich's upcoming Montreal show.

Whether inspired by his own idea or fulfilling a commission from a client, Peich produces all of the elements for his pieces himself, with the exception of the clock mechanisms. In his huge workshop in Montreal's Mile End, he cuts, shapes, melts, pours, stretches, saws, and polishes all the pieces of metal he will need. Form and design follow, worked and reworked to make a unique piece of jewelry, original and personal, that is also expression of the artist's imagination. Blowtorch, tongs, hammer, and tiny pliers are within easy reach. Next to the lathe are rollers and crucibles that evoke an alchemist's laboratory.

Francesc Peich has exhibited his work throughout North America, including Toronto at the One of a Kind Fair, Montreal at the Salon des Métiers d'Arts, the Philadelphia Buyer's Market, the New York City Fair, and at SOFA in New York City and Miami. His wrist, table-top, pocket, and brooch watches, as well as other types of his jewelry can be found at Montreal's Empreinte Boutique, where he had a solo exhibition in April 1999. His native Catalonia, Spain, will welcome him this spring for a gallery exhibition, along with the works of Québec jeweler, Sylvie Lupien. M

Christine Vauchel is a writer who lives in Montreal.



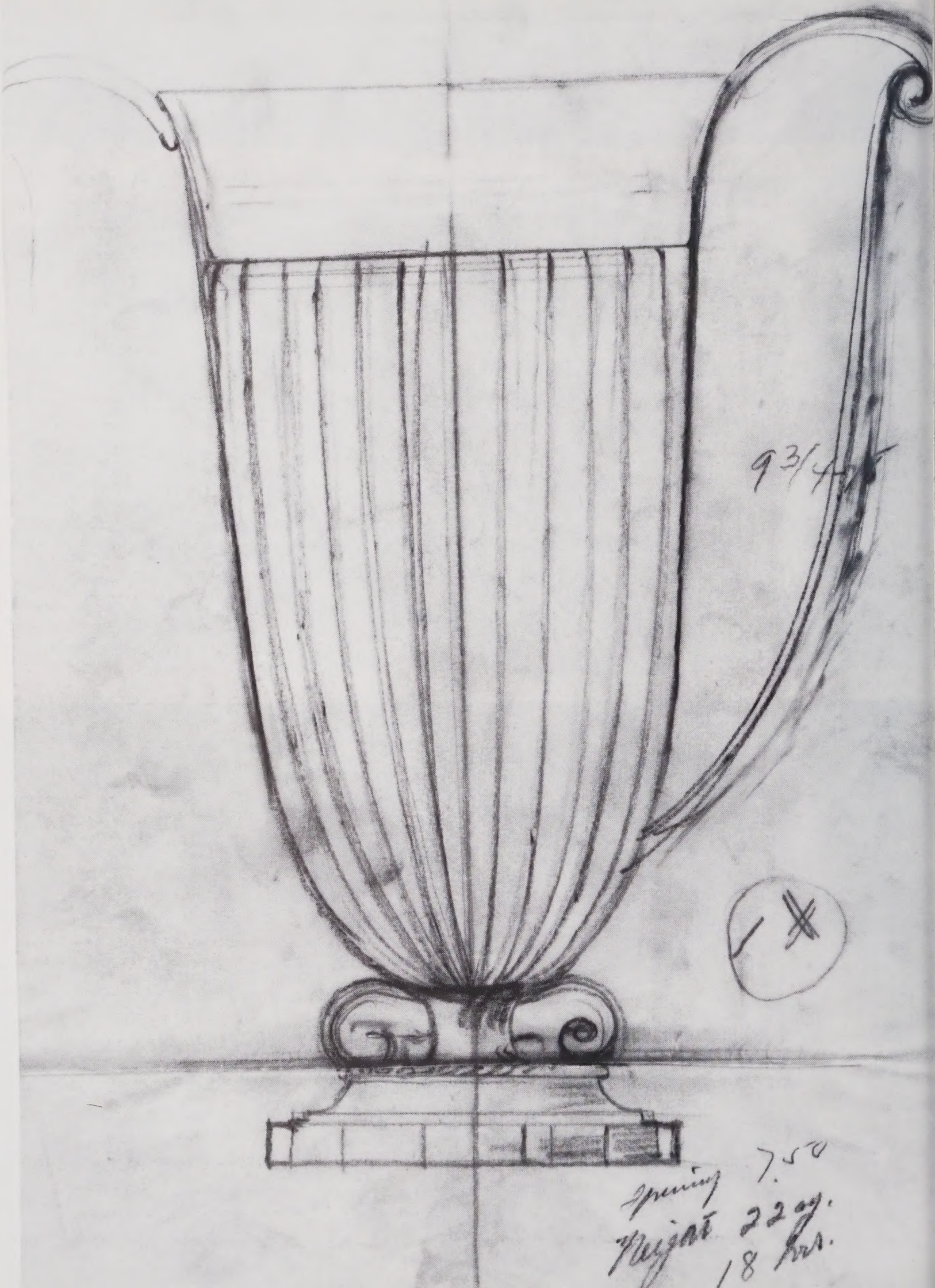
above
Teapot, Sugar Creamer
Sketch from Kalo Shop Collection
Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

ARTS AND CRAFTS AT THE KALO SHOP IN CHICAGO

text by POLLY ULLRICH

If Clara Barck Welles were alive today, we would call her an art star. Welles, one of the premier American silversmiths of the 20th century, got her start in the arts and crafts movement almost 100 years ago, but her influence continued long into contemporary times. Welles led a renaissance of Arts and Crafts metalsmithing in Chicago that, by the end of World War I, had achieved international recognition. (At the time, the only other American city that ranked with Chicago and its Arts and Crafts metalsmiths was Boston.) When Welles founded her workshop, the Kalo Shop, in 1900, she began a tradition and an institution that did not close its doors until 1970. By then, it had produced handmade silver objects for three generations of Chicagoans.

With the exception of a few craftsmen, such as Robert Jarvie, Arts and Crafts metalsmiths in Chicago were primarily women. They were intensely ambitious, innovative, and mobile. Like Clara Welles, these artists constituted the first wave of women who broke down barriers in the art world, and in other aspects of public and private life. This group included, for example, the artist Florence Koehler, whose 22k dull gold work challenged the ostentatious glitter of Victorian jewelry and earned vehement praise from British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art critic Roger Fry. Koehler travelled frequently to London, where she was dubbed "The Conversationalist" by Henry James, and to Paris, where she asked Matisse to critique her paintings. She died, finally, in Rome, where she is buried near Shelley and Keats.

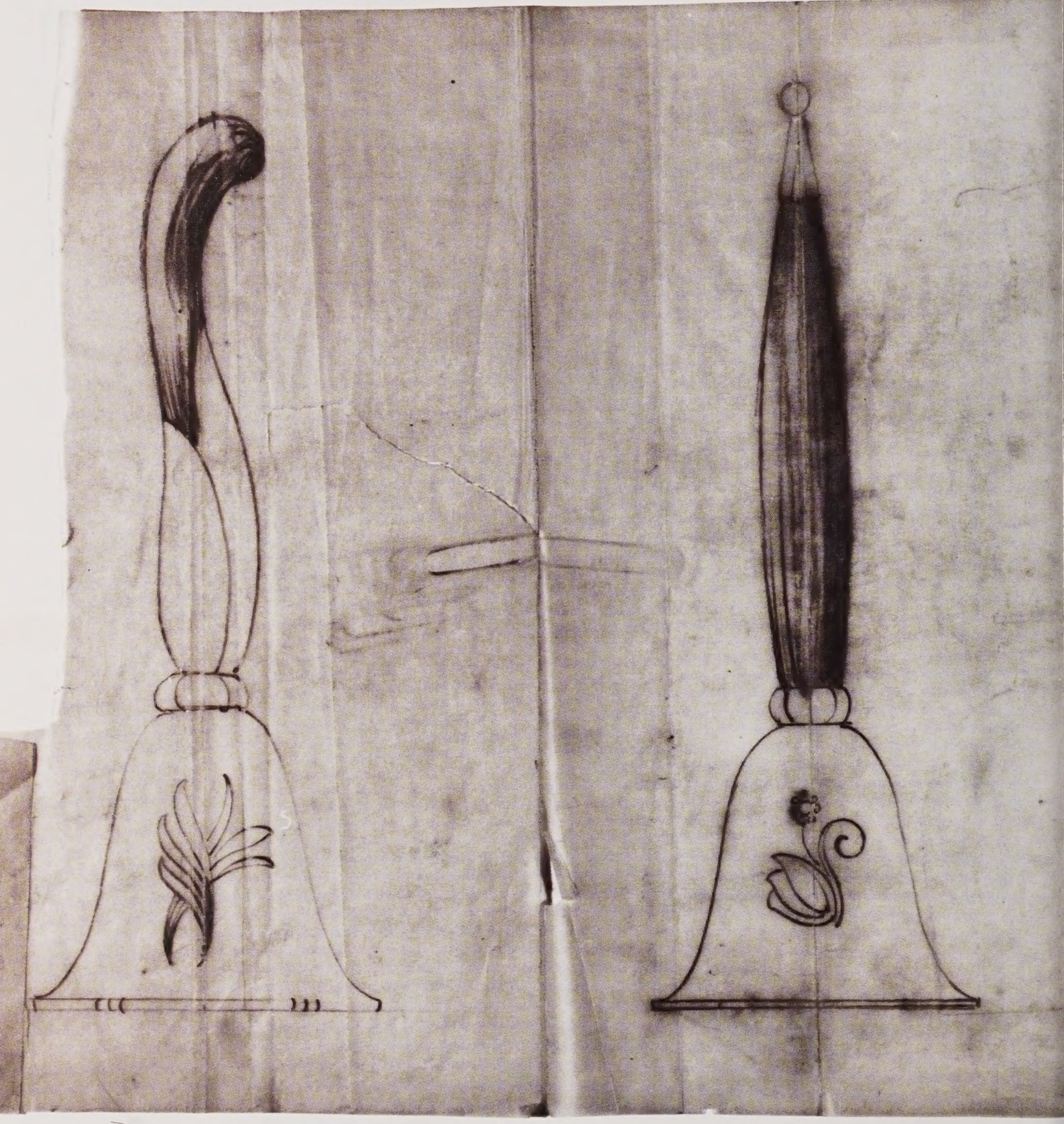
Another dynamic Chicagoan was Madeleine Yale Wynne, the daughter of the inventor of the Yale lock. Wynne insisted that jewelry should be used for artistic adornment, not for displaying wealth, and she became famous for setting common pebbles into her deliberately unrefined hammered and enameled metalware. The center of a number of cultural and literary circles in Chicago, Wynne wrote the popular short story "The Little Room," the name adopted by a group of well-known writers, artists, and architects. A third noteworthy artist was the peripatetic Eleanor D'Arcy Gaw, who trained with the British metalsmith, C.R. Ashbee, trekked to California to set up a partnership with the well-known American metalsmith Dirk Van Erp, then founded a design firm in Chicago. The nationally known jeweller Jessie Preston, who moved to Paris in 1918 and was last heard from there in 1934, was another member of this group, as was metalsmith Bessie Bennett, who became the first female curator at the Art Institute of Chicago. Another was indefatigable society matron Frances Glessner, whose Chicago mansion, the Glessner House, is still toured by those who want to see authentic Arts and Crafts decoration.

None of these artists had the staying power, however, of Clara Barck Welles. When Welles founded the Kalo Shop, Chicago was a clanging, thudding, muddy metropolis with a permanent fog of coal dust darkening its skies. Its chaotic slums were crammed with immigrants—the city's population had exploded from 350 people in 1833, when it was incorporated, to one million in 1890. The Great Fire of 1871, an economic depression, and a series of bitter industrial strikes that led to labor violence with many deaths meant there were large numbers of unemployed people wandering the streets. Because of the rapid growth and crowding, many Chicagoans feared a breakdown in the social order. They latched on to the Arts and Crafts movement, an attempt by artists and writers in Great Britain to counteract industrial urban problems by replacing anonymous and hierarchical factories with small, humanistic workshops for handcrafted goods.

left
Vase with Lines
Sketch from Kalo Shop Collection
Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

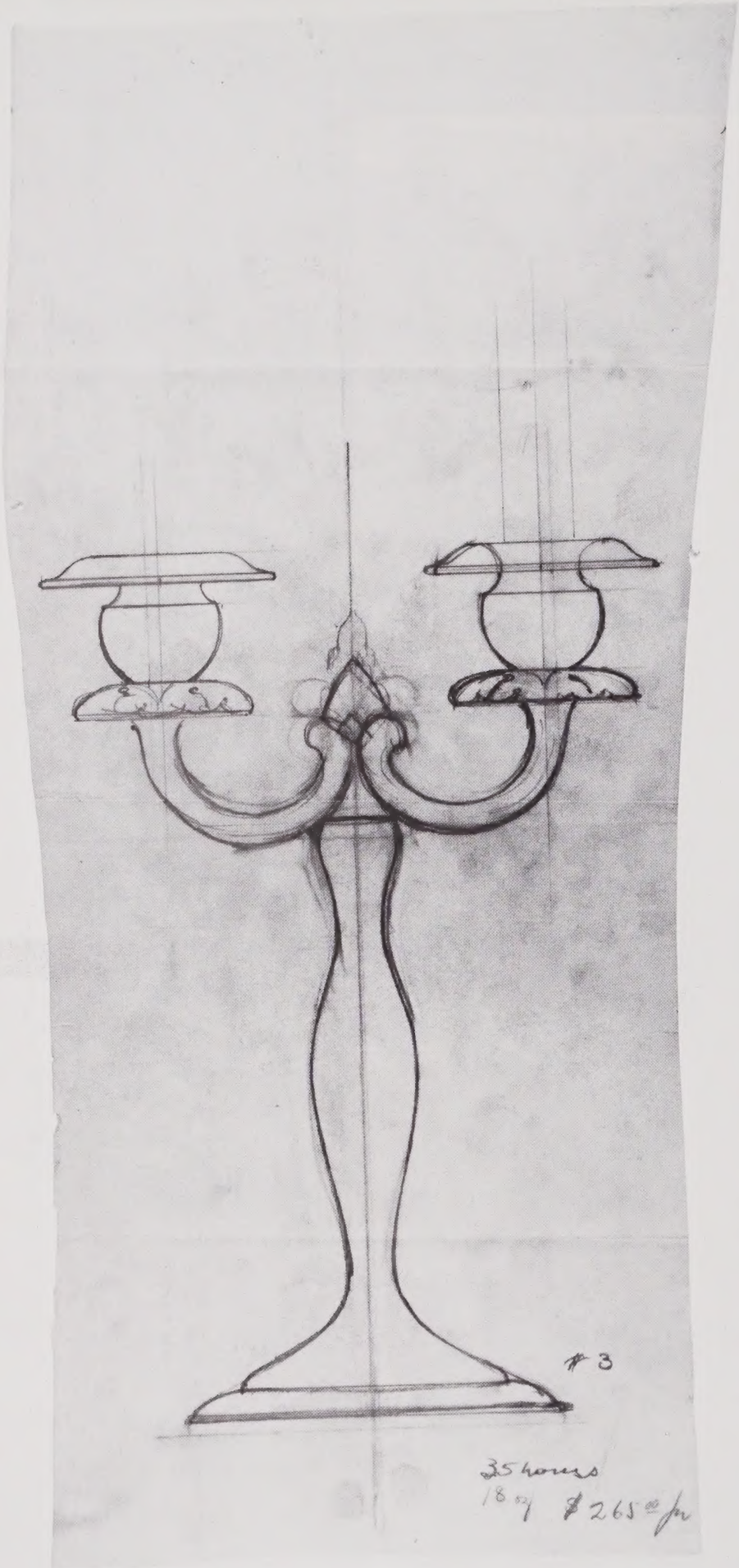
The idealistic Arts and Crafts movement, of course, did not stop the momentum of the industrial revolution. But Welles, whose work reminds us that the Arts and Crafts ideals have continued well into our own era, could be a prototype for contemporary craftspeople who produce functional objects today. A graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago's decorative design department, Welles founded Kalo (which was based on the Greek word for beauty) with the motto "Beautiful, Useful, Enduring." It seemed to echo the famous quote from the English Arts and Crafts writer William Morris, "have nothing in your houses which you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful." She commenced her career in the Arts and Crafts movement and then—with a social consciousness that coexisted with a canny business sense—lived out many of the movement's ideals long past its demise after World War I.

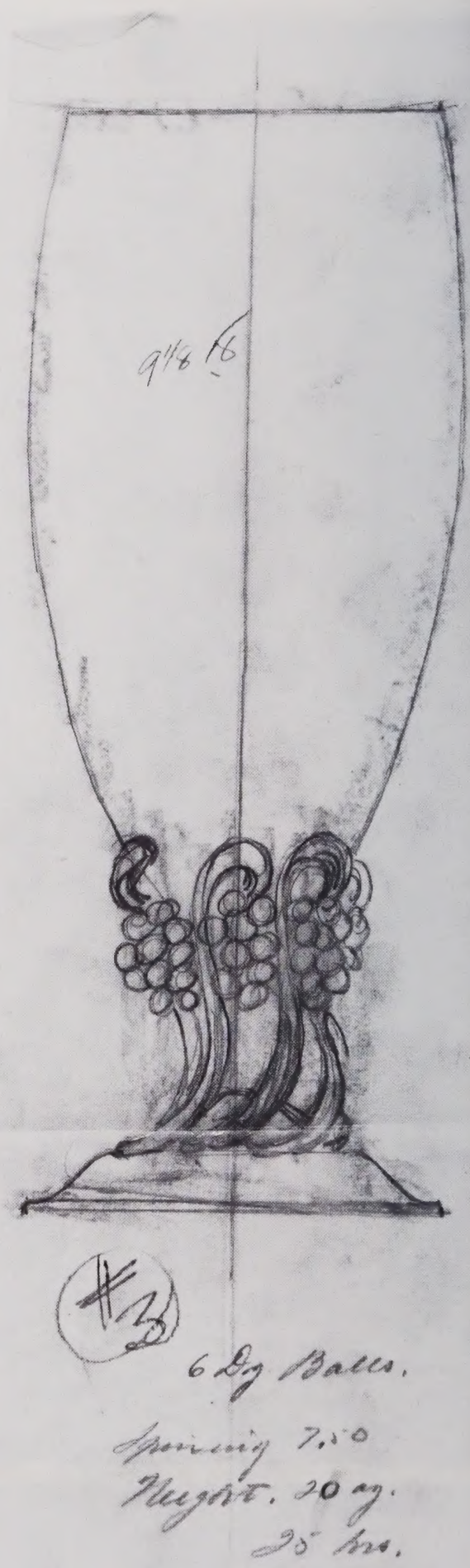
Welles and her husband, George S. Welles, set up the Kalo Art-Craft Community outside Chicago, which sold handmade metal objects at a Kalo Shop in the city's downtown area. At Kalo, metalsmithing became not just a profession, but a way of life. Welles was a gifted teacher and set up a school in the community, too—thus producing a generation of distinguished metalsmiths many of



above
Designs For Bells
Sketch from Kalo Shop Collection
Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

#1
This is the preffered design
Ebony
Do you think you can develope joint between handle and bell as suggested
5½" birch
18 ga
Weight 5 oz.
Time 10 hrs.
March 9-38





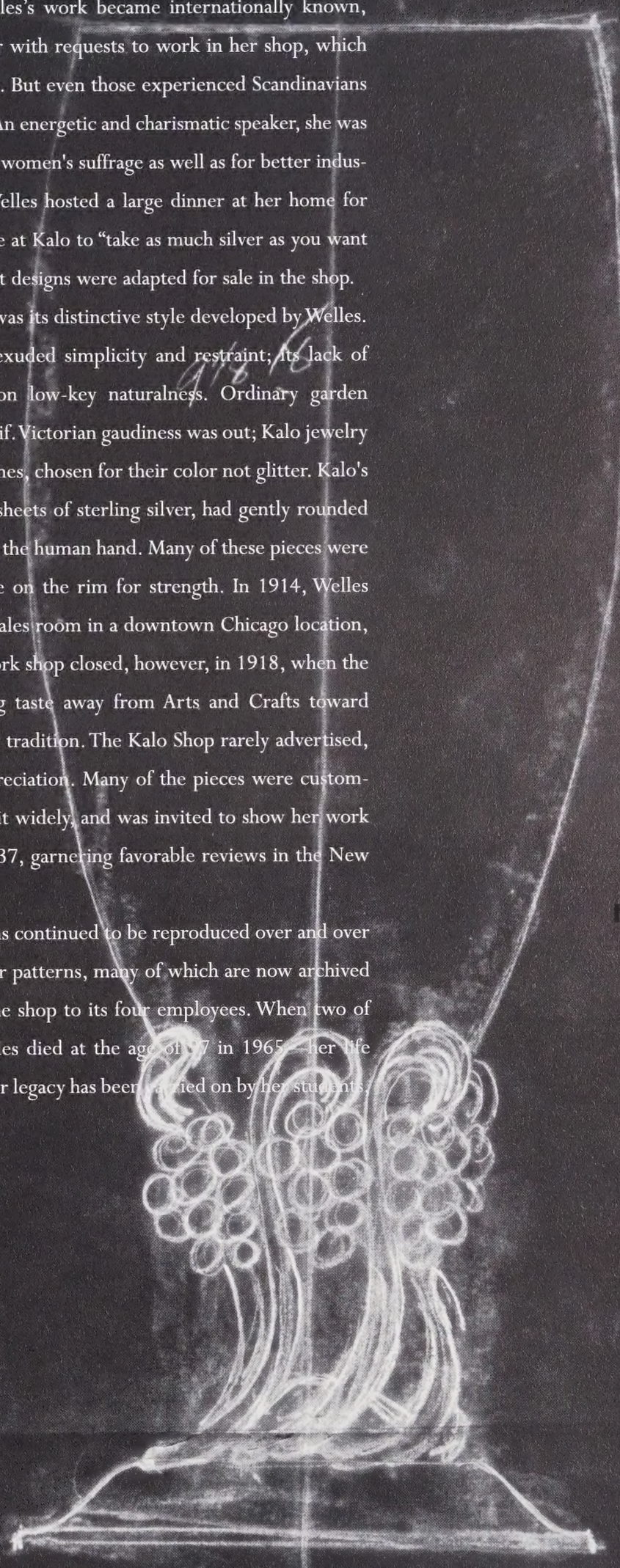
opposite page left
Candle Holder for Two Candles
Sketch from Kalo Shop Collection
Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

opposite page right
Vase with Balls
Sketch from Kalo Shop Collection
Photograph courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society

whom established their own workshops later. As Welles's work became internationally known, trained Scandinavian silversmiths began to approach her with requests to work in her shop, which eventually employed twenty-five metalsmiths at its peak. But even those experienced Scandinavians had to be retrained under Welles's exacting sponsorship. An energetic and charismatic speaker, she was frequently asked to give lectures. She actively worked for women's suffrage as well as for better industrial conditions for women workers. At Thanksgiving, Welles hosted a large dinner at her home for homeless girls. Every Christmas, she told the craftspeople at Kalo to "take as much silver as you want and make a present for your family." Some of the resultant designs were adapted for sale in the shop.

Perhaps the most pervasive Kalo influence, however, was its distinctive style developed by Welles. The objects were always handmade. The Kalo "look" exuded simplicity and restraint; its lack of ostentation reflected the Arts and Crafts emphasis on low-key naturalness. Ordinary garden flowers—such as lilies or pansies—were a common motif. Victorian gaudiness was out; Kalo jewelry included amethysts, opals, baroque pearls, and moonstones, chosen for their color not glitter. Kalo's famous holloware, which was beaten out of heavy, flat sheets of sterling silver, had gently rounded curves flecked with tiny hammer marks to acknowledge the human hand. Many of these pieces were decorated only with a monogram and a round of wire on the rim for strength. In 1914, Welles divorced her husband, consolidated her workshop and sales room in a downtown Chicago location, and opened a retail outlet in New York City. The New York shop closed, however, in 1918, when the experience of World War I moved the public's buying taste away from Arts and Crafts toward Modernism. But Chicagoans remained loyal to the Kalo tradition. The Kalo Shop rarely advertised, relying instead on word of mouth and community appreciation. Many of the pieces were custom-made for individual families. Welles continued to exhibit widely, and was invited to show her work at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1937, garnering favorable reviews in the New York press.

When Welles retired to California in 1940, her designs continued to be reproduced over and over again at Kalo by silversmiths working from brown paper patterns, many of which are now archived at the Chicago Historical Society. In 1959, she gave the shop to its four employees. When two of those craftspeople died, the shop closed in 1970. Welles died at the age of 87 in 1965—her life having spanned the Civil War Era to the Vietnam War. Her legacy has been carried on by her students, the next generation of American metalsmiths. M



Polly Ullrich is a writer living in Chicago.

OBSERVATIONS

the work of HAI-CHI JIHN

Hai-Chi Jihn's *Mother, a beautiful young lady* (Installation)

Within the vicissitudes of the everyday, particular moments of intelligibility emerge; moments that are not swallowed up by the intellect or the social but impress themselves upon our psyche casually, occurring out of habit. To thread a bare foot into a slipper, to cushion the purse's strap into the groove between the clavicle and the shoulder, or to pull a comb through tiny tangles of hair are miniature rituals that construct identity and are known and remembered through the objects that are tied to them.

From culture's collective memory, Hai-Chi Jihn re-creates objects such as these and imbues them with a sense of passage, devotion, and femaleness. While each object is formed with the subtlety, serenity, and precision of grandma's quilting stitches, they also belie a dis-function through extraction and exaggeration, building a trousseau, of sorts, for the contemporary young woman who must bridge many cultures.

Imbedded along the upper edge of an oversized, half-moon shaped comb made of translucent acrylic are barely unfolding silver roses that threaten to loose their delicate petals at the tiniest snarl. A silver mesh evening purse is hung from a spool-knit strap so long that it would tangle in the wearer's feet as she danced. To the other side of the purse is an oval mirror in a gilded frame of bobbie pins, replete with appropriate texts to provide guidance for the young lady: **"FOUR VIRTUES OF A CHINESE WOMAN SHE SHALL BE LOYAL SHE SHALL SPEAK PROPERLY SHE SHALL HAVE PHYSICAL CHARM SHE SHALL BE GOOD AT NEEDLEWORK."**

The proverb wrapping the looking glass conflates the tutelage of an elder with something imploring yet sinister. These objects of rare, frail beauty are poised to convey beatitudes to *Mother, a Beautiful Young Lady* and to pay to her a poignant homage through their re-configuration and dis-functional use.

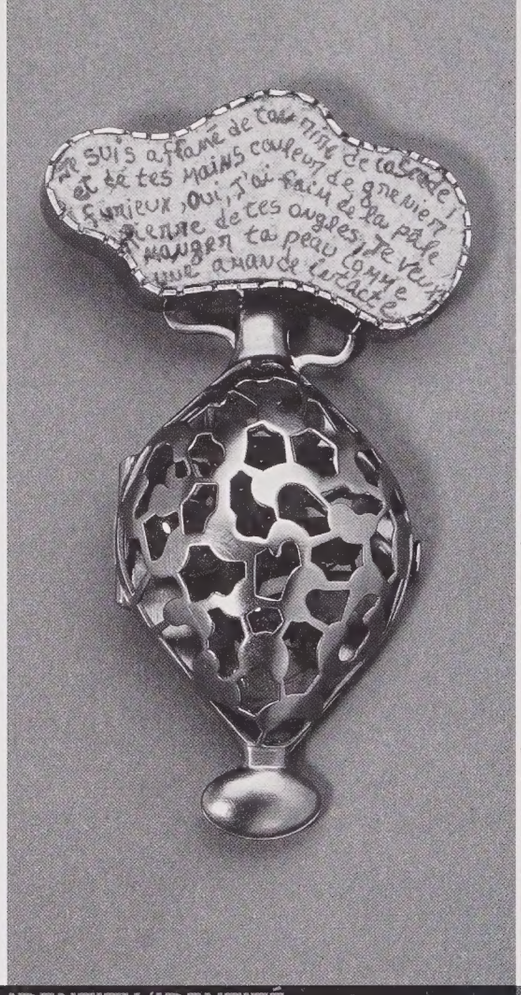
Michal Ann Carley is an artist, writer, and gallery director. She lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

opposite page
To Mother, a beautiful young lady, Installation, 1998

above
To Mother, a beautiful young lady (detail: *Purse)*, 1998
sterling

To Mother, a beautiful young lady (detail: *Mirror)*, 1998
picture frame, bobbie pins, silver-plated bronze
23 x 27 x 1 1/2"

To Mother, a beautiful young lady (detail: *Comb)*, 1998
sterling, Plexiglass
5 x 18 x 1/4"


Je suis affamé de ton nom de ta bouche
et de tes mains couleur de grenier
Furieux, oui, j'ai faim de ta pâle
Tienne de tes ongles, je veux
manger ta peau comme
une amande exacte

IDENTITY/IDENTITÉ: METAL ARTS GUILD OF ONTARIO 1998 JURIED EXHIBITION

YORK QUAY GALLERY
TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA
NOVEMBER 6 - DECEMBER 27, 1998

text by **BARBARA ISHERWOOD**

above
Catherine Bechard
Amande
sterling, glass, paper, wood
9.5 x 5.5 x 1.5 cm

right
Beth Beattie
Keep Cool
sterling
6.5 x 1.5 cm

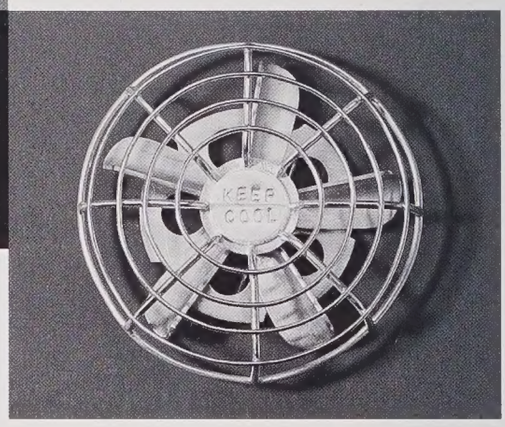
Identity/Identité presented a diverse array of well-crafted work by forty-six metal artists from across Canada. This year's collaboration with the Conseil des Metiers d'Art du Quebec resulted in a healthy number of entries from that province, which has a long history of producing distinguished metal artists.

The works that this viewer found most satisfying were those that combine a high level of creativity and technical ability with a clearly discernible response to the show's theme. Those taking on this challenge derived inspiration from both internal and external states. *Amande*, a large brooch by Montreal's Catherine Bechard, juxtaposes a handwritten love poem mounted on wood above a pierced and oxidized silver locket containing amber glass stones which the wearer can exchange for an object of their choice. The idea of containment also appears in Annette Van Leeuwen's silver pendant, *More Than Meets the Eye*, a human-like form with internal cavities that suggest the inner self. Jennifer Davies's necklace, *Black Sheep*, is a witty self-portrait, with one oxidized ewe facing away from her pristine sterling sisters.

The Steel Trophy (Best in Show) went to Kye-Yeon Son, whose meditative work reflects this Halifax-based artist's Korean heritage. *Wish* is a metaphorical receptacle for dreams, a cross-shaped sterling and 14k basin set in an enameled vessel that rests on a sand-filled frame. Identity Award winner Michaela Wolfert tackles the theme directly in *Erscheinung (Appearance/Apparition)*, three tiny silver mirrors with delicate gold detail, displayed on a framed mirror. Anne Barros, a noted maker of spoons, tailors her trademark form in *You Are What You Eat With*, a spoon whose stem resembles a sprig of flowers.

Ingiulittur (Big Waves, No White Caps), a brooch by former Arctic resident Allyson Simmie, features unpolished green Baffin Island serpentine set in a stylized silver wave and topped with a gold sun, to convey the rugged beauty of the North. Alberta's Glenda Rowley plays upon the drama inherent in Canada's famous mountain range in *Rocky 2*, a pint-sized theatrical tableau starring three caribou, scenic backdrops in pierced metals, and a hand-cranked waterfall. Pamela Ritchie's untitled sterling brooch unites abstract form, swelling volume, a shimmering surface, and a stylized fish fin, the latter reflecting her east coast home.

Among the works whose relationship to the theme was more ambiguous were many that were nevertheless remarkable in conception and execution. The Award of Excellence in Design went to Andrew Goss for his *Three Form Necklace*, which features interchangeable pendants composed of cast Portland cement mixed with silver filings that add a subtle sparkle to the matte surface. Antoine Lamarche's goblet,



Machu Pichu-USA, winner of the Award of Excellence in Hollowware, combines rough granite blocks and streamlined silver, to evoke ancient and modern architecture. Jean-Paul Garneau's bronze casts of fruits and vegetables are notable for their exquisite patination.

Student Award winner Beth Beattie's silver brooch, *Keep Cool*, replicates a vintage electric fan with moving blades. Shona Rae's oversize ring, *Emperor's New Clothes*, presents the amusing spectacle of a fool clad only in a garnet-topped jester's cap, clutching a flower as a dog barks at his heels. Ann Lumsden's *Mirror, Mirror* salt and pepper shakers in sterling, anodized niobium, and etched glass are so named for their subtly shifting palette of rich purple, blue, and green, running up one unit and down the other. The dynamism of Sylvie Lupien's vivacious *Sculpture Broche* (a sculpture with removable brooch) appears on the verge of bursting into movement. Those who see "Identity/Identité" as it tours Canada throughout 1999 and 2000 will be rewarded by many more fine examples of contemporary metalsmithing.

Barbara Isherwood is a frequent contributor to *Metalsmith*. She currently resides in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

CONTAINMENT

MUSEUM GALLERY,
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
EDWARDSVILLE, ILLINOIS
MAY 24 - JUNE 18, 1999

text by **BETSY SCHEIN GOLDMAN**

Curated by Billie Jean Thiede, Professor of Art at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and a past president of SNAG, "Containment" was a thematic exhibition of metal objects and jewelry. Thirty-one artists exhibited forty-three pieces. Set in a spacious, well-lit gallery, this exhibit showed well, allowing each artist's work to be absorbed by the viewer on its own merit, without crowding or distraction.

From the very small and precious works by Nicole Jacquard to the impressive and imposing bowls of iron, influenced by the arts of Asia, by Tom Joyce, the exhibit was a strong one of extremely personal styles and forms. Jacquard incorporates sea urchin quills, spirula shells, pearls, and brass screws in her exquisite gold *Shadow Boxes*, and, while Joyce's vessels have undeniable strength and weight, they are graceful and calming to the eye.

Thomas Mann's rusting steel necklace with heart cage pendant, which holds captive another heart of frosted acrylic, and Tara Stephenson's *Bulimia Bracelet*, a large copper boxed square that encircles the wrist and displays a hinged-top receptacle, under which are housed tongue depressors "for emergency use," both sent acrid messages that life is not all lollipops and roses. Though neither may possess true wearable qualities, the possibility exists that one could,use them, though not completely comfortably, as unconventional adornments while broadcasting somewhat disturbing and graphic statements.

The preponderance of humor at the exhibition was evidenced in several pieces on display. *Racetrack*, by Sam Shaw, is a graceful necklace of 14k wire shaped into a caged circle. Within the cage are three Tahitian pearls that roll with the movement of the wearer. Sue Amendolara's *Rolaid Ring* of sterling is a wearable pillbox that houses an actual Rolaid under its hinged lid. Harriette Estel Berman's *The Dilemma of Desire* is a heart-shaped box, cut and fashioned from preprinted steel (in this case, a Slim Fast tin can and plaid cookie container) and holding thumb tacks, which are painted red and printed with a white *m*. These treats are obviously non-caloric.

Gina Westergard's *Fallow*, a covered, footed container with a finial of large glass eyes and black fur, is fabricated of sterling, copper, gold leaf, glass, and paint and conveys a fetishistic feeling. The two talismans for hand and pocket by Betty Helen Longhi, of 22k and sterling, are gracefully curved and texturally tempting to touch. They are true to Longhi's concerted effort to portray movement and space.

Biophor, a vase in sterling, and *Sea-ish VI*, a pod-shaped container with a lid of quartz, both by Cynthia Eid, evoke visions of the underwater world. *Tazza*, by Tom Muir, also has a "creature" quality. It is a vessel set upon an arched pedestal with a sixteen-inch spike rising from the center; adorned with chains, rods, wire, and comb-like projections, it is topped with a spike-backed, worm-like crown.

Nearly all the pieces on display are the color of metal with only subtle color additions in shells, stones, et cetera, so the colorful works of Marjorie Schick are a welcome addition. They offer an invigorating change of scenery in an otherwise sedate ambiance. More sculptural wall treatments than vessels or jewelry, her *Bound Colors, Quetzacoatl*, and *LA/DC Suite* interrupted the calm of the gallery setting.

"Containers" included works by Dennis Nahabetian, Nancy Deal, Judy Onofrio, Mi-Sook Hur, and David Akins, among others, in a well-balanced presentation of exceptional quality and unique personalities, making it an important interpretation of containers and containment using the metalsmithing process.

Betsy Goldman is a metalsmith and a writer, who lives in Wildwood, Missouri.

above
Harriete Estel Berman
The Dilemma of Desire, 1997
Slim Fast cans, found material, thumb tacks
$1\frac{1}{4} \times 5 \times 5$"
Photograph by Philip Cohen

TRANSFIGURATIONS: 9 CONTEMPORARY METALSMITHS

HERRON GALLERY, HERRON SCHOOL OF ART
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA
OCTOBER 7 – NOVEMBER 1998

text by **MICHAL ANN CARLEY**

The works in the exhibition "Transfigurations: 9 Contemporary Metalsmiths" are tied together by the conceit that commonplace objects pilfered from our own culture are necessarily imbued with fresh meaning when artists borrow them for their own discourse and use. This is, of course, not a new concept, as it was primary to the practice of the Constructivists, the Dadaists, the Surrealists, et al., and it continues to have artistic currency in a milieu that embraces process, reflexivity, and a strong conceptual focus. So what might seem to be a question we have heard ad nauseam–once again posed by curator Heather White who asked, "At what point do these objects enter the nebulous field of metalsmithing, and how do some of them become transfigured in the collective imagination so that they are defined as art?"–is not so unproductive as we would have imagined.

The world has flocked to those who claim the ability to make matter transcend its own corporeal limitations: the alchemist who transforms base metals into gold, the Lord who turned water into wine, and the scientist who catalyses cold fusion into energy. Be it based in mysticism, faith, or the discovery of natural phenomena, the act of transfiguration is one that leaves the observer in awe, wanting to capture for him or herself the ineffable power to manipulate elements so that their material and intrinsic value is altered. This is the lure of transfiguration.

In order to call attention to the questions of form and function, the artists represented in "Transfigurations: 9 Contemporary Metalsmiths" create works that appropriate mundane objects whose function has been made archaic, defunct, maladjusted, and reflexive. Each artist utilizes, or at least quotes from, the metal crafting tradition, recognizing its important historical antecedents in the development of both vernacular and high cultural objects. Those who retain a close relationship to craft are more successful in conceptually manipulating their viewers than those artists who hold traditional craft practices in less regard and thus draw attention more to form and construction and away from meaning and use.

Kim Cridler's biomorphic sculptures of substructure and sheathing reference architectural and structural engineering, which, while laboriously constructed, belie any *real* functional origin. Elemental forms knit of gridded steel armatures, they seem as if found in situ, as an archeologist might stumble upon an ancient ruin. The room-size *Rim* is a circular matrix of welded steel that clings to the site as a hub; massive, yet appearing to tremble as light diffuses through its pig-gut skin. The structural tension forced by the inside and the outside, the full and the empty, and the open and the closed is made permeable by the sensuous, translucent materials that wrap the heroic structures.

Jonathan Wahl's *American Heritage Series* also engages utility and tradition, but here the reference is direct and necessary. Through tinsmithing, he fabricates and remakes early American objects made for carrying, storing, and dispersing food. These domestic objects, such as pails, pitchers, and food graters, emblazoned with golden-stenciled emblems of American patriotism--the eagle and cornucopia--are meant to nourish and sustain life, thus functioning in a physical, corporeal manner. Metaphorically, they connote the sweat of the brow, a simple and pure pioneering and maverick spirit, and the rewards of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Wahl, however, challenges this American history of plenitude and situates the myth in an ironic context of Puritanism, pragmatism, and manifest destiny by making the objects hyperfunctional, mock-heroically over-sized, and with an almost sexually abundant plethora of spouts and holes. A six-foot-high pitcher with eight spouts and one handle would be impossible for any but Paul Bunyan to tilt, yet even he, unable to

aim such abundant containers, would spill all the contents.

David Clifford's *DHC Home Shopping Channel Video* is outrageously acerbic while perilously real. Items for sale according to inventory numbers and flashing bargain prices are hawked on his made-for-TV video, which establishes an indexical relationship with our desire to acquire, own, and collect--in this case, works of art. An assisted, ready-made *DHC Item #T.S. 95* was originally an everyday aluminum teapot purchased in Oakland, California's Chinatown. On one side is engraved and anodized the narrative image of a happy woman reading in her middle-class home. An inscribed banner informs us that this is a picture of "HEALTH." On the reverse side is an image of a reclining, indeterminately gendered nude with what appears to be a face strapped onto its groin. Here the banner reads, "ADAPTABILITY," which lends a functionally commercial aura to the queasy scenario. The works attempt to invert our pleasure and thrill at the possible acquisition of a real deal on an art object, yet the comic hard sell of its frenetic pitch –"It's all about aluminum–the metal of the '90s" - and the call-in testimonials are too camp to actually implicate the viewer.

Other characteristically strong works are Sondra Sherman's *Rings of Engagement* series. Each ring, symbolic of the esteemed state of promise, is set with a measuring device such as a balance, complete with bubble, a compass, or an egg timer. Tara Stephenson fabricates cosmetic cases that at first blush appear functional, yet a close examination reveals that the objects are not capable of improving or altering one's appearance. Rather, they assert and transgress vanity itself with the inclusion of altered implements such as a gun sight to capture one's prey, lenses that distort, and rubber stamps and erasers that respectively overscore and erode.

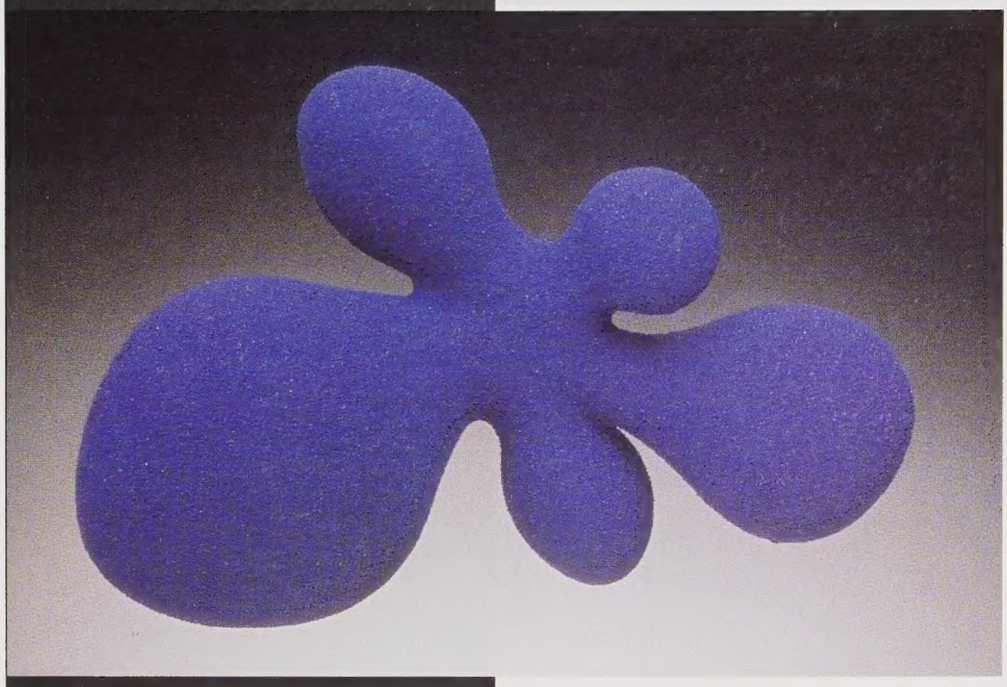
Michal Ann Carley is the Director of the Northwestern Mutual Life Gallery at Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

opposite page top
Tara Stephenson
Fragile Exterior
wood, eggshell inlay, powder puffs, face powder
12 x 4 x 4"

opposite page left
Jonathan Wahl
American Heritage Bucket, Revolution/Salvation, 1994
tin
13 x 10 x 8"

this page above
Splatto II, 1999
enamel powder, resin
$2^{1}/_{4}$ x $3^{1}/_{2}$ x $1^{1}/_{4}$"

this page right
Knobby Bracelet, 1999
silver, enamel powder, resin
outside dia. 7"



JOE WOOD
MOBILIA GALLERY
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
MARCH 10 - APRIL 13. 1999

text by **BETH FRANKL**

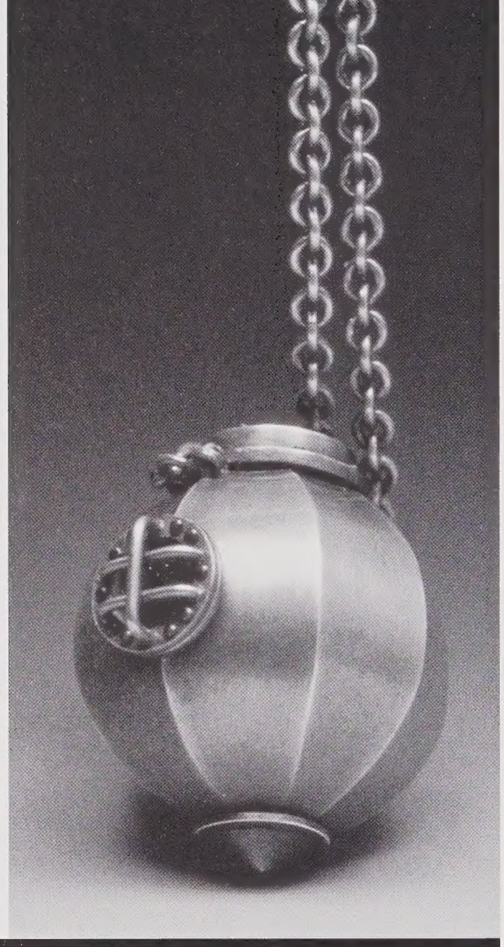
For years, Joe Wood's art jewelry has hovered between sculpture and ornament, as he has explored synthetic ornament's role as a visual communicator. To do this, he has focused on creating structures that embody basic physical principles and thus exude an energy or force. In developing his most recent work, Wood, head of the Metals Department at the Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, assigned himself the task of using cutting-edge technology to further develop these themes. He designed the pieces using a computerized modeling program, then "printed out" the digital files on a rapid prototyping machine as three-dimensional objects in cellulose. Because the cellulose is infused with a low viscosity plastic, it is very durable. Wood applied epoxy resin, enamel powder, wax, and flocking to the cellulose material to create various kinds of surface qualities. The results are vibrantly colored, organic-looking forms that appear to move and expand.

The brooches and bracelets in this collection are ripe, pillowy structures heightened by irresistible color and texture. The *Splatto* brooches, for example, are like mini explosions in vivid red, blue, and green; each brooch seems to capture the moment of mid-burst. The *Plash* brooches in red and yellow bring to mind a water droplet splash caught in a time-lapse photo. Wood's bracelets embody a similar dynamic; their bright exteriors appear elastic, barely able to contain the spheres, bumps, and finger-like projections that extend out from the center. In the *Knobby* bracelets, one senses that the knobs are not only pushing out from the center but also stretching away from each other. Wood does not ignore the wearability of his jewelry; his bracelets are large and dramatic, but very comfortable on the wrist. The two necklaces in the collection feature cellulose elements delicately framed in stainless steel. In the *Roto* necklace, the cellulose beads are left in their natural state, an eerie pale, as if they could glow in the dark, while in his *XY* necklace, the cellulose is flocked a fuzzy purple.

Wood abandons the cellulose in his series of five rings wrought in sterling silver and gold, but these pieces differ only in material, not inspiration or method. His designs on digital file were printed out in meltable plastic instead of cellulose, then cast. The rings also convey growth and expansion. On one, oxidized silver projectiles rise from the ring shanks like tassels on a jester's hat; another resembles plant tendrils that look as though they're searching for more territory.

Wood's *high-tech* pieces reflect a back-to-basics approach that he admits may be a reaction to some of his earlier work–specifically the evocative white burnt oil series, which he describes as chalky and desiccated looking. What stands out in this collection is Wood's emphasis on color and organic form. These current pieces are not merely references to ornament. They are ornament of the most exuberant kind.

Beth Frankl is a writer who lives in Brighton Massachusetts.



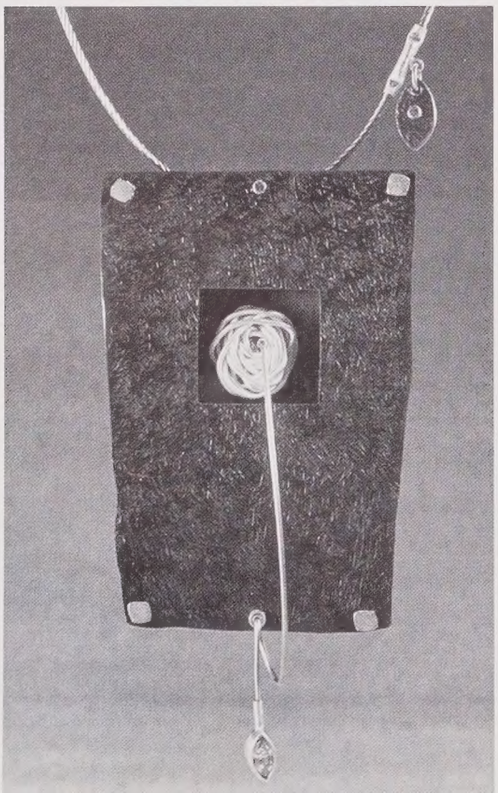
TALISMANS FOR THE COMING MILLENNIUM

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY GALLERY OF ART
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI
MAY 23 – MAY 30, 1999

text by **NOEL LEICHT**

above
Chris Irick
Submerge
silver, brass, mica
18 x 1 3/4 x 1 1/2"

below
Roger Rimel
The Process of Information
sterling, copper, diamond
3 1/2 x 2"



The opening sentence of Juror Eleanor Moty's statement for the Society for Midwest Metalsmiths' spring show, "Talismans for the Coming Millennium," defined the term "talisman" and the theme of the exhibition: "an object held to act as a charm to avert evil and bring good fortune, something producing apparently magical or miraculous effects." It was similar to the definition published in the prospectus. However, few pieces seemed to fit the theme of the show, which brings up the philosophical question of what a juror should do when the submitted objects miss the point. This dilemma arises more and more frequently. Many artists simply ignore the request for specific content (or refuse to stretch themselves?) and submit whatever is in their repertoire or in inventory at the moment.

That said, "Talismans" did exhibit a spectrum of work being done within the metalsmithing community: small quixotic sculpture, such as Mike Gleason's riveted copper *Dieter's Candybowl*, depicting a ferociously toothed creature, and Toweesak Molsawat's *Self Portrait*, in which all of the sensory receptacles were sewn closed, reflecting the adage, "See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil." Sarah Perkins's lush enameled brooches reflected the sensuous, while Marcia MacDonald's *Waiting for Dad to Come Home* countered with almost gaudy display. Dennis Nahabetian's elegant and intricate gold-plated copper wire weaving *Trillium*, the whimsical brooches by Mark Rooker, and Nick Grant Barnes's organic-looking hammered *Hollow Brooches* further gave evidence to a variety of conceptual approaches. Techniques, too, were well represented, with hollowware such as Timothy Lloyd's red patinaed copper and silver lidded *Kettle Jar VII*, and Allen Linder's handsome cast bronze *Division Spheres*; the reproducible: Kim Lucci-Elbualy's object/pendants of enameled copper; the wearable: multiple brooches studded with stones and enhanced by a variety of metalsmithing techniques and textures; the unwearable but delightful *Adjustable Necklaces* by Susan Ganch. Also deserving of mention are Cynthia Eid's elegant *Fold Formed Necklace* and Nancy Moyer's *Six Degrees of Separation Ring*. There certainly was a plethora of skill, craftsmanship, and ingenuity present.

Several works by artists that pertain to the theme deserve individual recognition. Most impressive for their multi-faceted approach are the thoughtfully conceived sculptures (approximately 24 x 15 x12") of Daniel French: *Exposing the Truth?* and the two *Offerings*. Each features a wearable brooch nestled in a setting elevated like a sacred reliquary in an elaborately constructed infrastructure that makes the small seem monumental. French's elements are mindfully chosen to create interest and contrast: a small-scale brooch explodes into a large sculpture, a refined modernist pin is enshrined on a primitive twig-like construction, and precious metals and stones are juxtaposed with mundane materials. Engaging details prevail. For example, in *Exposing the Truth?*, French cleverly detaches the gold chain from its pendant and uses it as a decorative element–coiled snake-like, in the base of the sculpture, which resembles the frame of a tin-roofed shed. Precious talismans metaphorically protected for the future, French's work was the best of the show.

The thick cable chains and heavy casings of Chris Irick's hollow-formed series of silver pendants seem to insure their longevity. Each piece has a unique imagery and mystery of its own. These treasures imply some riddle or magic and call out to be examined in order to reveal their contents and inner secrets. Andrew Sulecki's *Proof Positive*, twice as large in scale and fabricated of copper with a bold brass chain, is amazingly similar to Irick's pieces in concept and design.

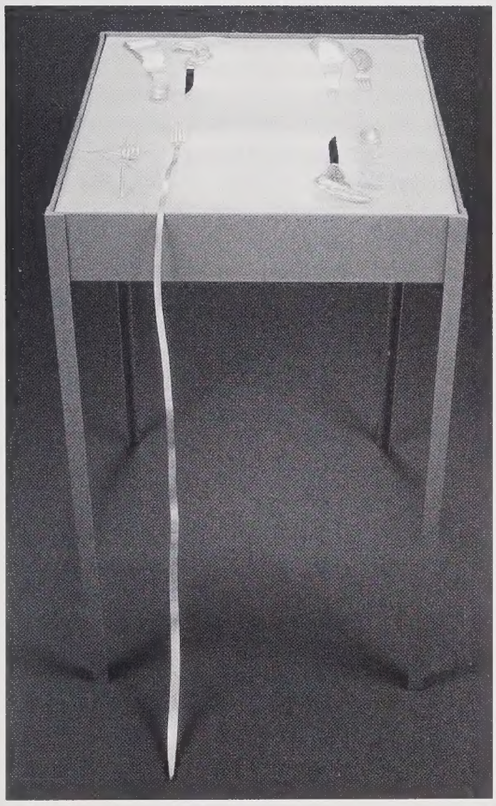
Roger Rimel, a fine jeweler known for his traditional work, interpreted the talisman theme with a provocative pendant, *The Process of Information*. A fossil encased within a textured copper becomes the source for a strand of silver terminating in a diamond drop in front of the monolithic shaped copper. Rimel's use of symbols, materials, and design are reflective and evocative. The fossilized artifact encompassed by the universal conductor for electricity seemed to represent some ancient revelation waiting to be conveyed into the future.

The pieces comprising "Talismans" stand on their own as visually creative work representative of today's makers; but the exhibition itself wavered in its presentation and message. As an art exhibition of magical objects for the coming century, it lacked the focus and direction intended by the Society for Midwest Metalsmiths. Furthermore, when the show was

installed, the materials were not listed. Additionally, artist statements, a valuable guide for this kind of exhibition, were not provided to help viewers appreciate the work or understand its intent. But perhaps, good art articulating a theme should stand on its own.

The challenge presented by SMM was interesting and provocative, but the depth of thought on the part of the artists in meeting that challenge was often lacking and made the show a disappointment. Metalsmiths entering this type of themed art exhibit must be prepared to stretch their studio time beyond making the marketable. They should conceive germane objects worthy of the proposed exhibition. The sponsors of the show, the jurors, and the viewers deserve that respect.

Noel Leicht is a metalsmith and writer living and working in St. Louis.



above right
Set to Remember, 1998
sterling, bronze
16 x 12 x 4"

above
T-issues, 1998
sterling, steel, Polycore
22 x 26 x 35"

CAROLYNN DESCH: NEW WORK

ARTEMISIA GALLERY
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
APRIL 1 - MAY 1, 1999

text by **JOHN BRUNETTI**

Utilizing domestic objects–cupboards, cups and saucers, flatware–Carolynn Desch creates quiet, small-scale installations that reflect on the emotional and physical fragility of the human spirit. Desch relies on one's familiarity and inherent comfort with her prosaic objects to emphasize the relationships she draws between the intimacy of hand-held utensils and the internal structures and harmonies of the body. For Desch, the rituals of dinning become surrogates for the mechanisms of balance required by the body and mind for existence.

Sterling silver is Desch's predominant material of choice in her seven new works and is well-suited for evoking the formality of the dining room, as well as the dualities of strength and vulnerability imbued in her images. In the fabrication of her tea cups and plates, Desch breaks with the metalsmithing tradition by revealing her methods of attachment, a system of tabs that "stitch" together pieces of metal, to emphasize the precarious equilibrium that is the foundation of her work.

Light and shadow are also crucial formal elements in Desch's pieces, as she adorns the surfaces of objects with meticulous drawings created with the obsessive drilling of tiny perforations. The gallery's white walls and the shadows of Desch's wall-mounted cupboards illuminate and darken these meticulous patterns of perforations, revealing intricate images in which the pores of her surfaces define the contours of both specific and ambiguous anatomical symbols. Created in this way, Desch's ethereal images are barely visible from a distance and serve an important psychological function in drawing one into the intimate proximity required for the success of her installations.

T-issues is the largest and most physically commanding installation presented, displaying a glowing white and gray table set for two, complete with Desch's own fanciful mutations of the silverware. Evocatively lit from beneath the translucent vellum surface of the table, Desch's knives, forks, and spoons bear handles stretched, pinched, and puffed to resemble arteries, intestines, and lungs. The organic irregularities and vulnerability of these utensils' new handles are dramatically juxtaposed with the order implied by the formality of the place settings, seemingly both encouraging and repelling touch. Desch suggests that the process of physical and spiritual renewal begins with one's ability to make the proper selection of the symbolic utensil vital to servicing one's needs. The engaging ambition of *T-issues* hints that potential of Desch's work lies perhaps in increasingly complex table settings.

Desch creates several indelible, magical images with her recent pieces. The delicate, jewel-like manner in which she portrays the intense physicality and fragility of the body evokes the mystical quality of Persian miniatures. Approaching her distorted, surreal objects, one's sense of order is upended and replaced with focused contemplation of the unseen, organic structures that rule the psyche and the body.

John Brunetti is a Chicago-based critic and the Illinois Editor of *dialogue*.

above
Tara Mackintosh
Hawkmoth
brass, copper, enamel
24 x 4 1/2 x 1"

TARA MACKINTOSH
MATERIA/THE HAND AND THE SPIRIT
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA
NOVEMBER 1 – 30, 1998

text by **BEVERLY K. BRANDT, PH.D.**

Nature, the elements, weather, motion, and insects are recurring subjects in Tara Mackintosh's multi-media assemblages. A fall 1998 exhibition at materia/The Hand and the Spirit chronicled her evolution as metalsmith and enamelist since receiving her MFA in 1995 from Arizona State University. The show reflected a maker who is optimistic and playful, while possessing a quirky side that is equal parts crazed inventor, Dr. Seuss, and Rube Goldberg.

This exhibition demonstrated that Mackintosh, who teaches art in the Chicago area, is evolving as she searches for the best means to showcase her ideas and technical scope. The show included works from her post-graduate-student days (circa 1996), such as *Cautionary Measure* and *Opportune*, and similar pieces from 1998, including *Weather Machine* and *Windward*. The strongest and most recent pieces were a series of garden stakes, including *Hawkmoth*. As their simple titles suggest, these pieces are focused and replete with technical finesse.

Opportune and *Weather Machine* are metaphors for Mackintosh's life. The former resembles a weathervane. Standing seventeen inches tall, it features five copper-and-resin vanes that pivot along a staff, which in turn stands upon four resin casters. Finials terminating each vane have as embellishment enameled arrows pointing every which way. Casters feature details from tiny maps whose paths lead in all directions. "Which way is the wind blowing?" the piece seems to ask, as if its maker is seeking the optimal course to follow.

Weather Machine is a variation on this theme. It combines fabricated copper with a patinated finish, turned wood with a burned and tinted surface, and clear glass. This columnar piece rests on three mismatched wooden wheels, allowing it to spin. A tiny monocular and a minuscule wind gauge, each affixed to slender arms, guide its peregrinations. Crowning its columnar trunk is a compass-like element: a chart lying beneath a domed magnifying glass. Wrapping the baluster's surface is a cityscape, resembling the skyline of Chicago, rendered in two moods: cool and blustery; warm and balmy. Here again, Mackintosh seems to ponder whither her move to the "Windy City" might lead, and the effect the city's changeable mood might have upon her own.

Duality is present in Mackintosh's work in emotional tone as well as in subject matter, which often pits natural world against human-made. Thus, imagery drawn from weather and insects merges with references to buildings, roadways, and vehicles. Mackintosh suggests that these disparate elements have achieved a state of uneasy equilibrium.

Cautionary Measure and *Windward* range from pessimistic to optimistic in tone. The first piece references road construction, barriers, and surveyor's tools. Completed just after Mackintosh's move to Chicago, it alludes to obstacles she first encountered there. The latter–resembling a madcap plumed tricycle–is conversely romantic and exuberant. Its cloisonné casters, embellished with dainty bugs and beetles, reveal Mackintosh's affinity for the zoomorphic.

Rube Goldberg comes to mind when viewing her patinated contraptions, which are joyfully jerry-rigged and cleverly cobbled together, akin to children's toys. In most cases, they convey more whimsy than malevolence.

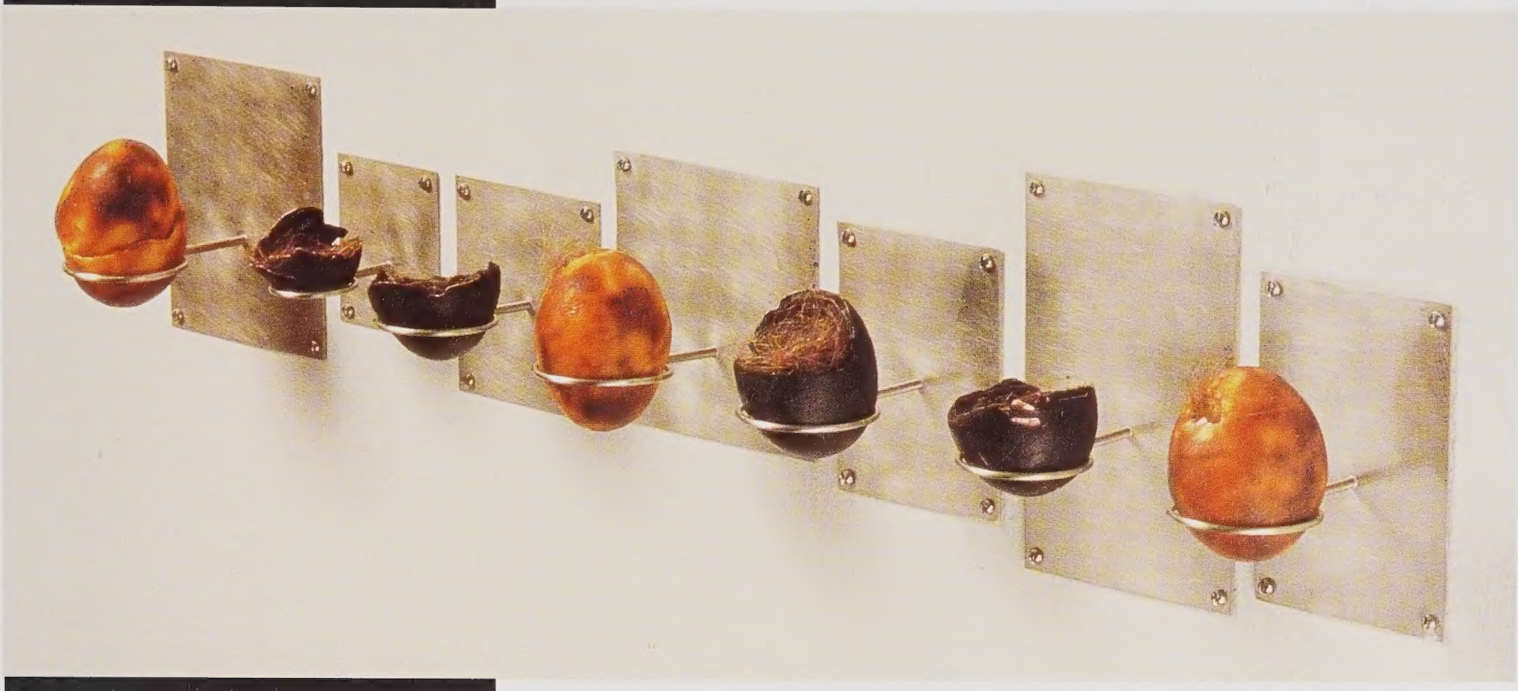
Within the context of such frankly funky pieces, Mackintosh's *Garden Blessing* series is outstanding. These four sublimely crafted works transcend their lowly purpose as garden stakes, having more in common with wands, scepters, or even oversized, Victorian-era stick pins.

Standing eighteen to twenty-four inches tall, these captivating wall-mounted pieces are beautifully finished front and back. *Dragonfly* is exuberant and prosaically flower-like. *Hawkmoth* is staidly dignified, having a Byzantine presence with its pattern of roundels within discs. *Grasshopper* is mechanically complex: affixed to a jointed staff, an enameled cabochon glows like the eye of a peacock's feather while sporting a tiny whirligig. *Potato Beetle*–whose cage-like finial encloses an orangy cloisonné ball–resembles a rattle or noisemaker.

These pieces' function may be threefold: to signify that, in a particular garden, one insect reigns supreme; to serve as totems, warning away a specific insect intruder; or to celebrate these four insects' distinctive traits, preserving their jewel-like fragility by means of tiny cloisonné portraits.

In this regard, Mackintosh calls to mind turn-of-the-century enamelists–René Lalique as one example–who were equally fascinated by the delicate beauty of the insect world, capturing for posterity nature's fleeting moments and evanescent phenomena. In doing so, they sought to freeze time in its tracks, as if to delay the inexorable rush of one century into the next. Working at the turn of the millennium, Mackintosh continues in the tradition as she explores the uneasy balance struck between the human-built environment and Mother Nature.

Beverly K. Brandt is an associate professor of design at Arizona State University.



DIVERSITY IN METAL: A METAL ARTS GUILD GROUP EXHIBITION

RICHMOND ART CENTER
RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA
SEPTEMBER 2 - NOVEMBER 14, 1998

text by **SUZANNE BAIZERMAN**

One vibrant center of the American studio jewelry movement after World War II was the San Francisco Bay Area. Luminaries in the region, such as Margaret De Patta and Merry Renk, not only revolutionized the look and purpose of jewelry, they also had a commitment to the diffusion of the movement through education, exhibitions, and sales. Bringing like-minded people together, they founded the Metal Arts Guild in 1951 as an inclusive, regional organization of metal artists. The guild has continued since that time, in recent years focusing its energies on its annual Metalsmiths' Fair.

In 1998, MAG organized its first juried exhibition in ten years. The exhibition was worth the wait, affirming that the talent and energy that once inspired a revolution in metal continues today. Fifty-four well-chosen works, created by sixteen artists and selected by gallery owner Susan Cummins, artist Sandra Enterline, and artist/museum educator Colleen Schenck, were sensitively installed in the Richmond Art Center in Richmond, California. The objects represented a full spectrum of metal work–from body adornment to functional pieces and sculpture–many featured mixed media. Though in some pieces art and form seemed emphasized over function, the latter quality was apparent in most of the works, and this was underscored by the jurors' awards. The varied body of objects made several timely points: metal art is not necessarily effete, it is not always precious, and it need not be small in small scale nor devoid of content. It can be gritty, edgy, erotic; it can have something to say. Tension was created by expressions at the extremes: small versus large, edgy contrasted with precious, and earthy next to the more refined.

Deborah Boskin's *In the Garden of Good and Evil*, judged Best of Show, features an array of amulets set in a field of pure black sand. These engaging objects of bronze, patina, and wood, combined with found objects, lead the viewer down a haunting path, eerie yet beautiful. Lin Feng-Ru takes the uncanny a step further in *House of Death*. Rendered in copper, glass, bronze, enamel, and soil, a human figure is imbedded in nail-ridden earth. A similar mood is created in Susan Galbraith's *Pythogenesis*; hair-filled egg shells leave one not wanting to know where the newly hatched snakes alluded to in the title are to be found. The darkly humorous, *Teething Ring*, by R. P. Leaf, combines porcelain teeth, and silver into a macabre visual metaphor. At once menacing and erotic, Curtis H. Arima's powerful *Bladed Ball and Socket II*, in copper, sterling silver, acrylic, and steel, a work that suggested an organic form, received an honorable mention.

These provocative, earthbound works were offset by works that allude to history and culture or which suggest personal narrative. Creating a complete world on a small scale, Jennifer Fecker's *My Bali* presents a terraced island in silver and gold, which rests on grains of jasmine rice and sprouted delicate metal shoots. The *House at Zaira* of silver, copper, and fresco secco, by Julia V. Turner, offers a beckoning, exotic environment. Kris Patzlaff's untitled necklace establishes a tension between ancient practices and modern technology, as small silver and gold plates, reminiscent of circuit boards, play off dinosaur bones, coral, and horn. The lacemakers' art, as rendered in baroque portraiture is suggested in Tina Rath's *Bracelet for Velasquez*, a winner of a Jurors' Award. It features a series of cage-like forms in sterling and stainless steel, giving the illusion of a lacy cuff. Donning this elegant sculptural form, one would occupy exalted status and certainly be excused from mundane labor.

Among several large metal sculptures, a steel nut and bolt by Jane Johnson entitled *Inside Out* had an impressive presence, transforming familiar, everyday forms to monumental scale. Resonating to the mass and presence of the large sculptural pieces, yet on a smaller scale, were Deborah Lozier's bracelets, of copper and torch-fired enamel, such as *Welded Study in Blue*.

In the more functional domain are two pieces by Michel Royston, a sensual ladle of forged sterling and salad servers worked in sterling silver (the fork) and mountain mahogany (the spoon). The intriguing *Dr. Elvebakk's Ladle*, by Monica Schmid, contrasts intricately curved copper and silver with a play of light and shadow. In Deborah Boskin's *Havdallah Spice Container* a lacy ball is balanced on a curvaceous stalk, an elegant solution to ritual demands. Seung Lim Lee's lyrical *Letter from the Moon* formally presents nine apparently non-functional, utensil-like forms of grace and beauty in a format that encourages viewers to contemplate the essential beauty contained in the form of tools.

Leaving the exhibition and passing through the art center's lobby, the visitor passed a showcase that contained five pieces from the Metal Arts Guild's permanent collection. This display honored early members Margaret De Patta, Peter Macchiarini, Merry Renk, Harry St. John Dixon, and Carl Jennings. These early members nurtured the roots of MAG and the regional metal arts movement. "Diversity in Metal" reaffirmed their continuing legacy and the vigor of metalwork in the area.

Suzanne Baizerman is Imogene Gieling Curator of Crafts and Decorative Arts at the Oakland Museum of California.

above
Susan Galbraith
Pythogenesis, 1996
nickel silver, eggshell, beeswax, hair
5 x 3 x 3"

MICRO ORGANISM: CONTEMPORARY JEWELRY FROM GERMANY

VOLKER ATROPS, DORIS BETZ, BETTINA DITTLMANN, KARL FRITSCH, KAREN PONTOPPIDAN, BETTINA SPECKNER, DETLEF THOMAS
CURATED BY KLAUS BURGEL
WOOSTER GARDENS, NEW YORK, NEW YORK
APRIL 30 - MAY 30, 1998

text by **MARJORIE SIMON**

There is a world of difference between the conceptual visions of these young European designers and many of their American contemporaries. Klaus Burgel gathered a select group of colleagues with a range of fresh approaches to traditional jewelry ideas and materials. Silver and gold are in the German rings and pins, but the silver is oxidized black, and the enamels are matte and scumbled looking, much like the sand to which it is distantly related. Forged silver wire makes a black hieroglyphic as imagined by Doris Betz. Bettina Dittlmann enamels directly on nests of binding wire; objects, which may or may not be wearable earrings, huddle together like burnished pods in yellow, green, and black. Karl Fritsch's tiny pins, also enameled, are impertinent appendages.

These young Germans have broken free of limiting traditions in jewelry-making, with one major exception: craftsmanship. The work is extremely well made and, for the most part, thoughtful and substantive. Not many sink beneath the weight of their own pretension. Perhaps the most exciting development, and one that leaves most Americans behind, is in the treatment of enamel.

Laid out on flat tables on sawhorses, the installation had a bare bones, warehouse-like feeling that made it possible to concentrate on the work. Volker Atrops presented one hundred aluminum rings, ninety-eight of which are fabricated and two are cast. They are squiggly, gestural lines and by themselves, not impressive. A rock crystal pendant with 18k links on nylon string stretches concept to the limit, but a tiny three-dimensional Roman cross on green enamel is organic and elegant. An installation of a chain laid out like an open cube and oxidized black is an intriguing conceit, while a series of nine rings are as spontaneous as folded paper models.

As if thinking in wire, Doris Betz explores the possibilities of line, with wire forged and oxidized a dusty black, like a black drawing on the neck. Brooches of the same motif appear to be scribbles translated onto the body; ends are tapered as if the ink ran out. Impossibly thin filaments which are themselves sometimes soldered together, seem to cry out for explanation–how did she do that?

Bettina Dittlmann, whose contemporaneous show at Jewelers'werk Galerie only slightly overlapped this work, continues to show fully resolved ideas, even when they're just sketches. *Memento mori*, a big binding wire nest with text, goes way beyond other textual fabrications, in that the text is subordinate to the form. In fact, the text is nearly invisible. It is a deep black, evocation of Victorian hair jewelry and carries the dark side of memory, the remains, the husk of memory. *Sue vot eris* and *dove sta memoria 1933x*, also of binding wire, have the grisly repellent quality of hair caught in a drain.

A grouping of twenty-two pieces included single earrings and enameled objects that function as aspects of process. They may be earrings that don't quite work; a couple look collapsed, burned, or over-fired. One looks like the skin of a fired green pepper. Another is a grid-like skeleton of iron filaments soldered together to make a hollow form, as if Dittlmann swept up freshly cut hair and blew it into the shape of an okra pod. The speckled, mottled, spent pods have expelled their contents and now lie waiting to be blown away. Each object has a dark beauty all its own, but when they are displayed together, it is like looking at the detritus of a flower arrangement whose colors have stubbornly refused to fade.

Detlef Thomas places his rings in wooden boxes with gold embossed cases labeled "Possible Precious Object," but the title leaves him open to the response, "Possibly Not." Irony is a fragile partner, and the outsized concept is perhaps not quite matched by the result. *Choker*, a neckpiece about four feet in diameter, consists of a silver chain ending in two rock crystal balls, like incomplete male genitals. With this work, Thomas's aggressive male persona--*The Halo* includes a cock ring--contrasts with the Victorian sensibilities of Bettina Speckner's brooches and her few sparse objects scattered in the large display case. Photo-etched fragments set in gold make lovely but quiet brooches that bring the photographic image to the body, and are perhaps as much a commentary on memory as Dittlmann's "hair" pieces.

More fabulous enamel was in store from Karen Pontoppidan. Flowers and birds spring from the tops of her rings, looking much like Karl Blossfeldt's photos of greatly magnified plant parts. Pontoppidan's constructions lack the delicacy of Dittlmann's, but they have a chunky, glassy charm all their own. Enamel is applied freely, even wantonly, and the small pins look like candy to fairly shovel into the mouth. An ingenious idea is Pontoppidan's "car jewelry," baubles attached to little suction cups, hung upside down from the top of the display case and reflected in the mirrored bottom.

Completing the grouping was Karl Fritsch, who had the nerve to cast what looks like chewing gum in silver and gold; somehow it works as a witty conceit instead of a pretentious one. Like many of his contemporaries, Fritsch references 19th century German and European jewelry. Not all the brooches are equally successful. Some of the work seems tentative, as if it were on its way into being instead of being fully resolved. But a grouping of tiny pins, a pair of cufflinks, a bracelet, and two rings manages to be fresh and gestural. Some tiny pins are the equivalent of a stray mark, on paper, not so much about the line as, say, Betzs work, but rather a punctuation mark for the body. And the final group of animal rings was simply charming.

Regardless of some individual missteps, this work should be seen by anyone who thinks about the meaning of jewelry and actualization of ideas into objects for the body. There was little at the exhibition that is conventional and a great deal that is full of wit, irony, vitality, and intelligence. Perhaps the Wooster Gardens Gallery will continue to bring jewelry to public attention.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith, the chair of Metalsmith's Editorial Advisory Committee and a frequent contributor to this magazine.

above
Karen Pontoppidan
Rings, 1994
silver, enamel

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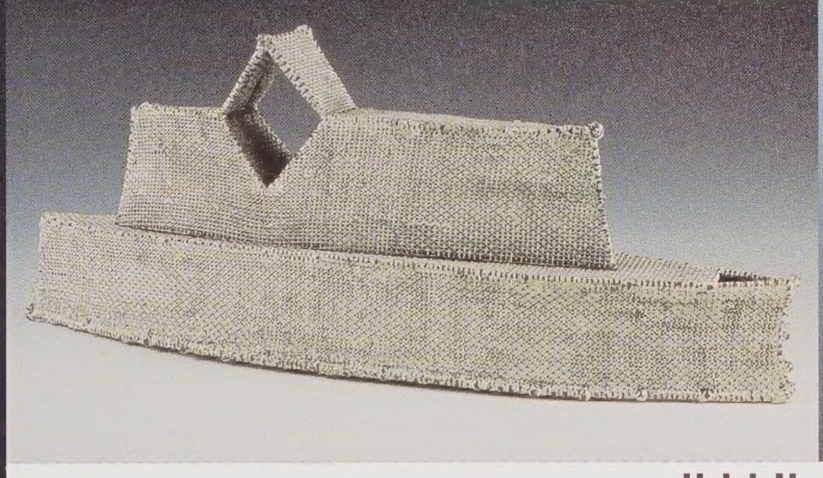

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opposite page, clockwise from top

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silver
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Biba Schutz
Circum Pendant, 1996
oxidized bronze and copper, sterling, fine silver
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Billie Jean Theide
Butte #EF-8 (teapot), 1997
bronze, electroformed copper, enamel, patina
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photograph by Billie Jean Theide

Whitney Boin
Post Engagement Ring, 1996
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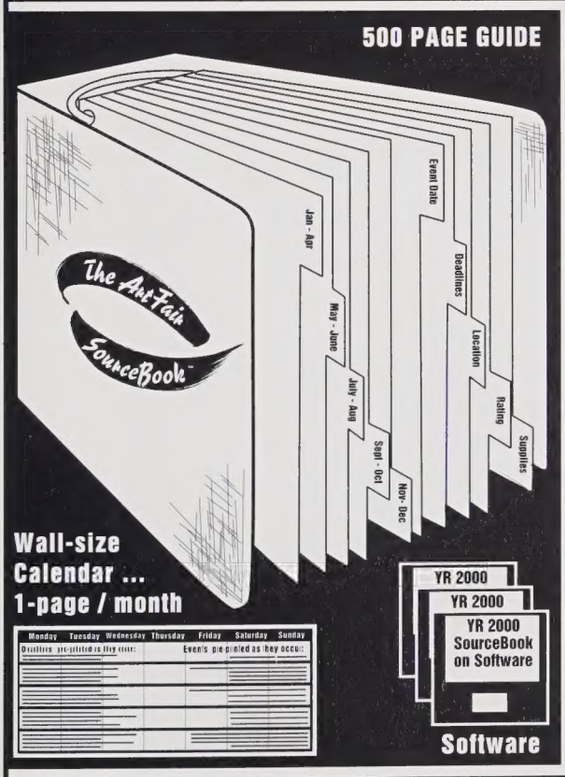

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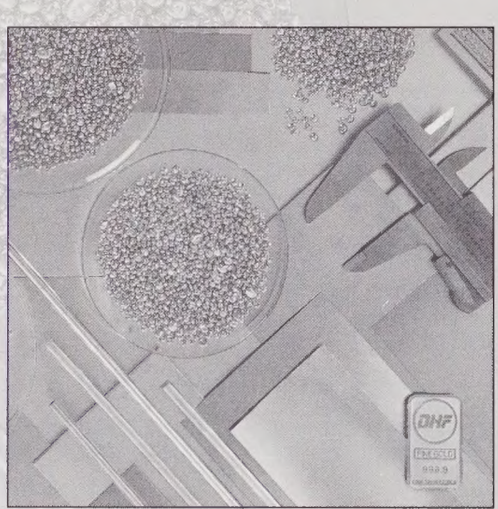

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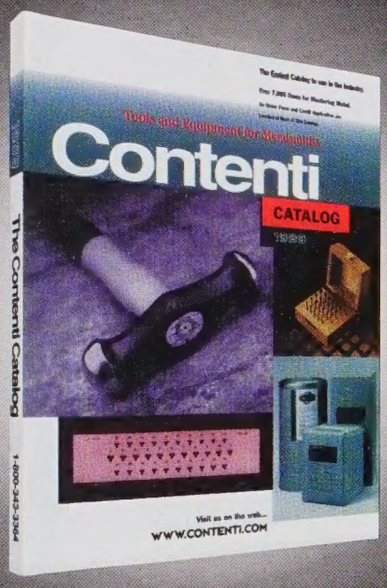

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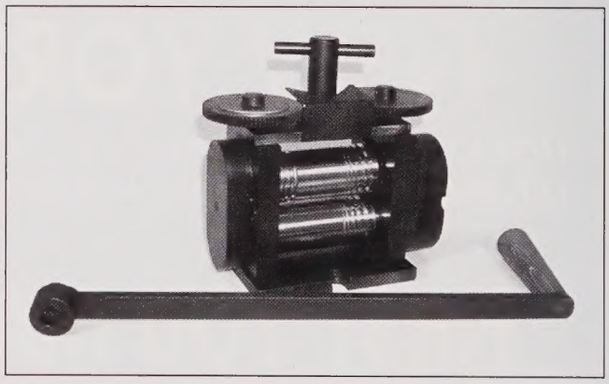

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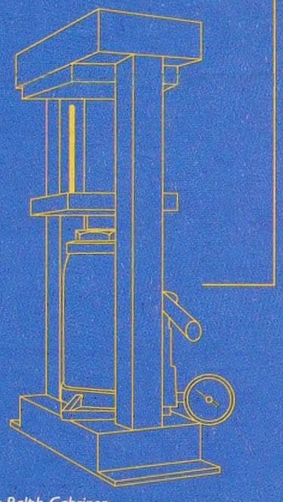

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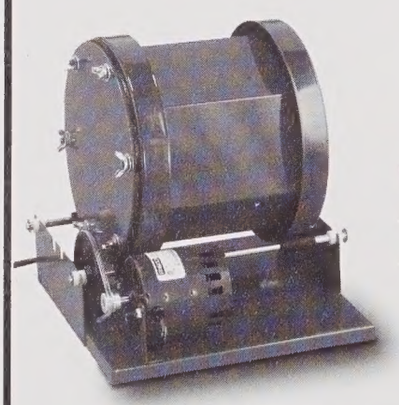

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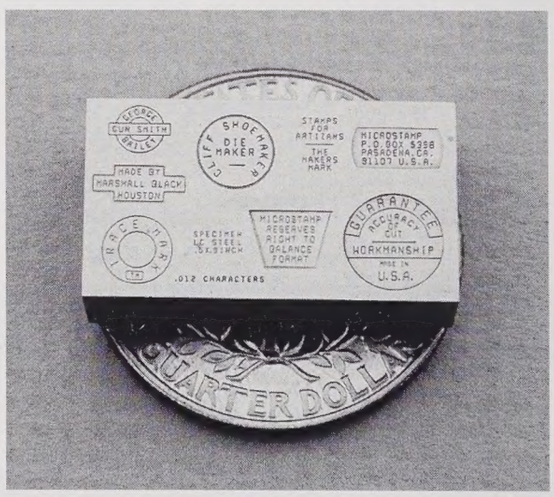

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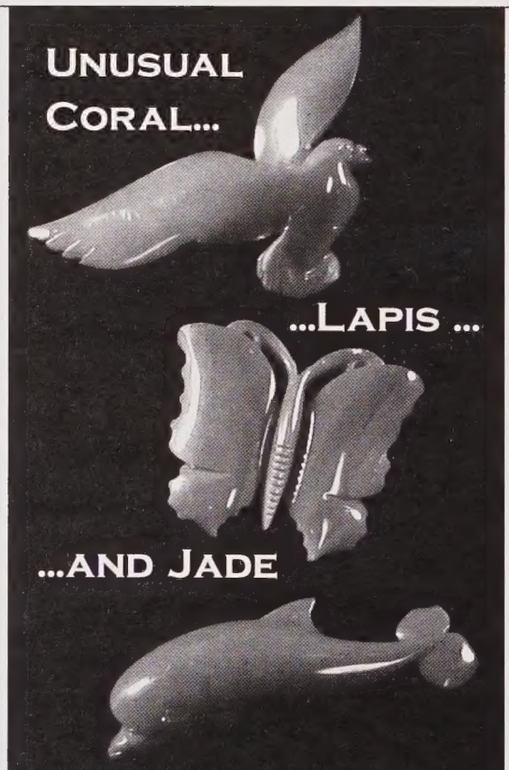

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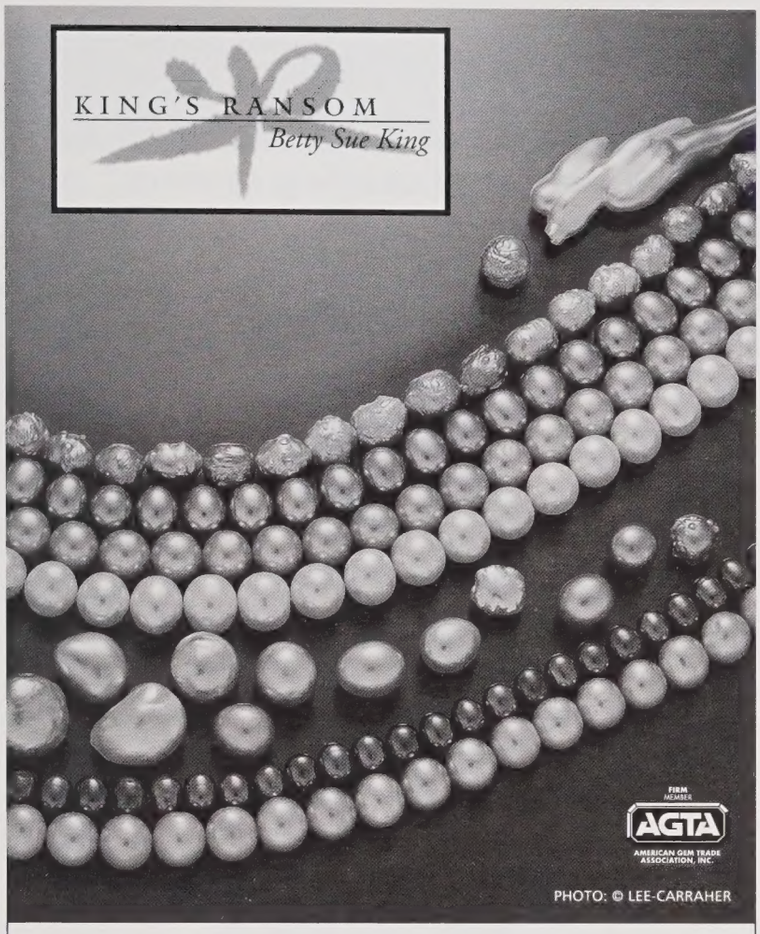

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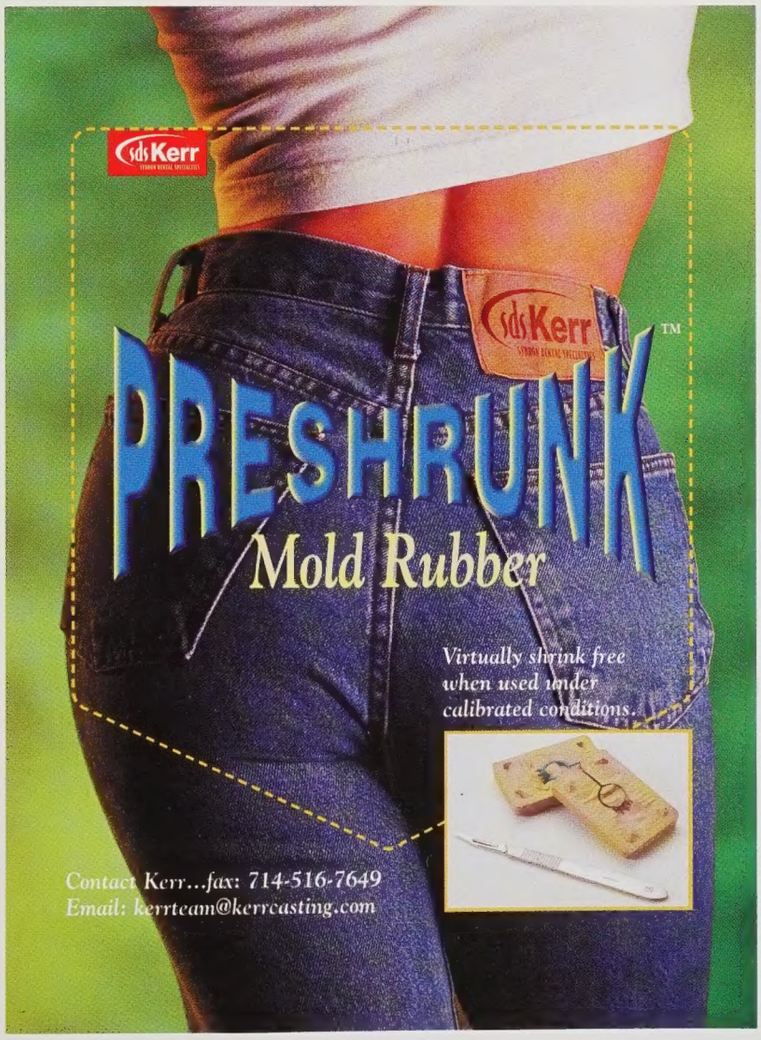

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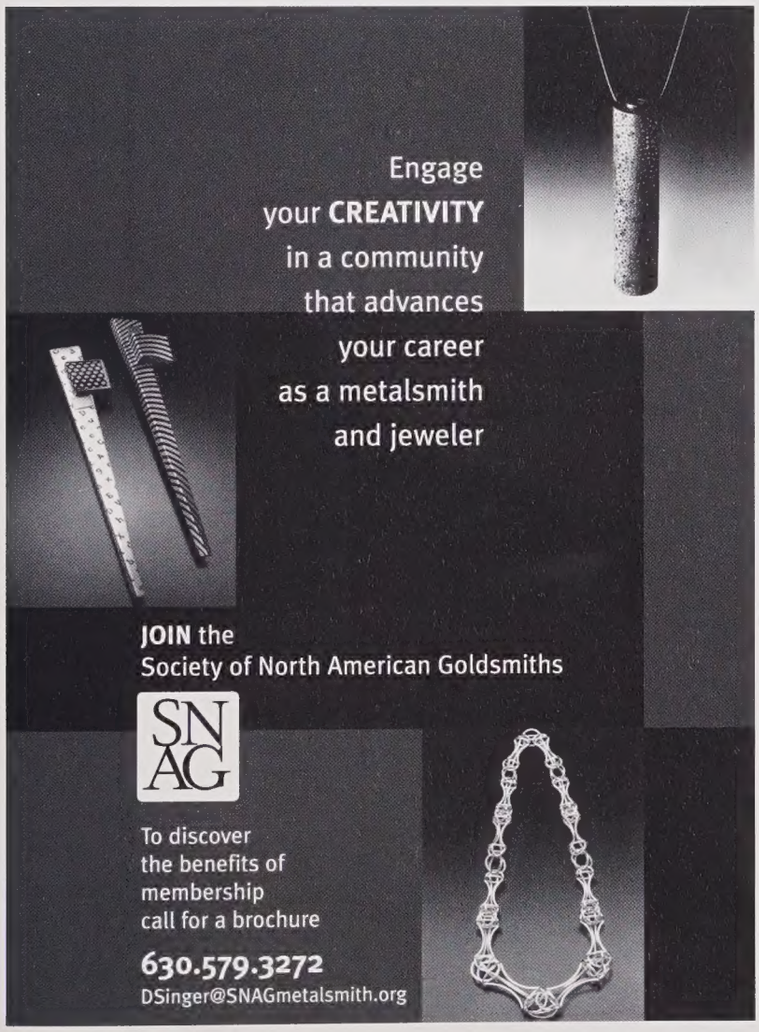

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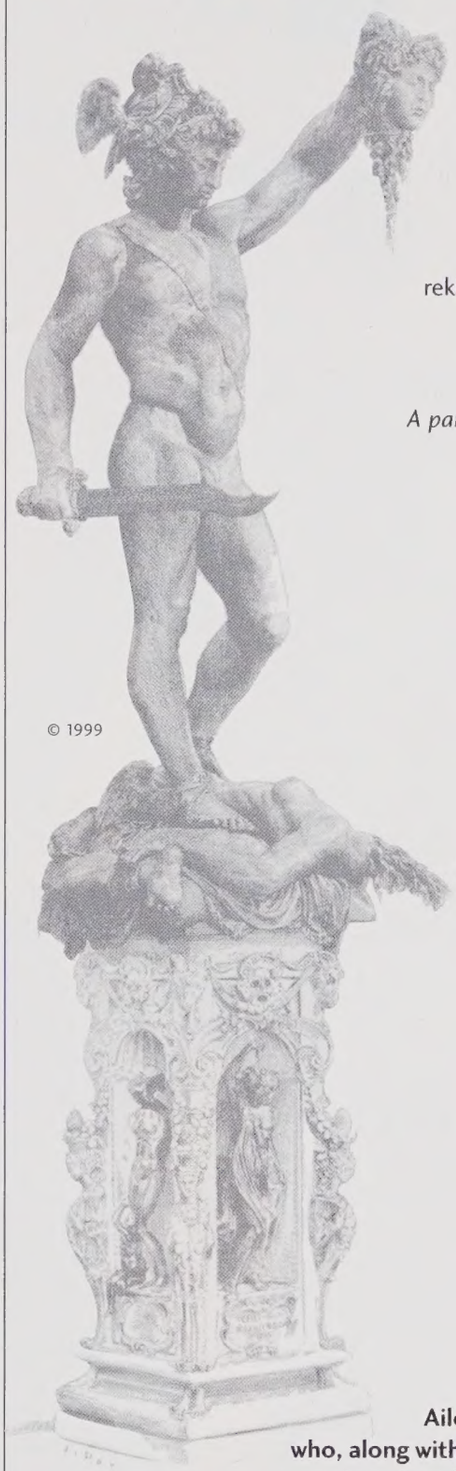

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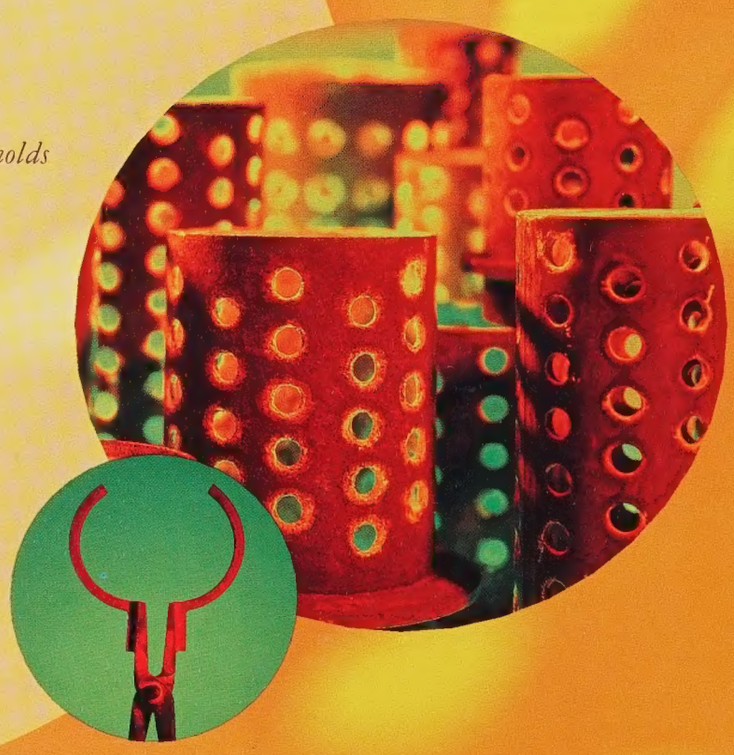

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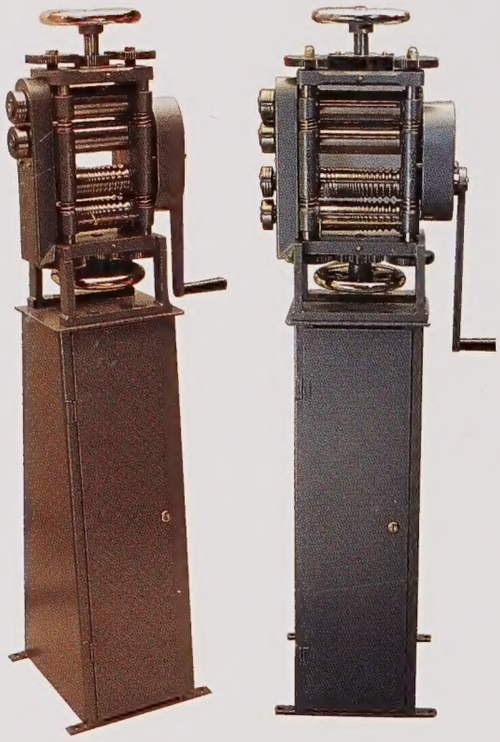

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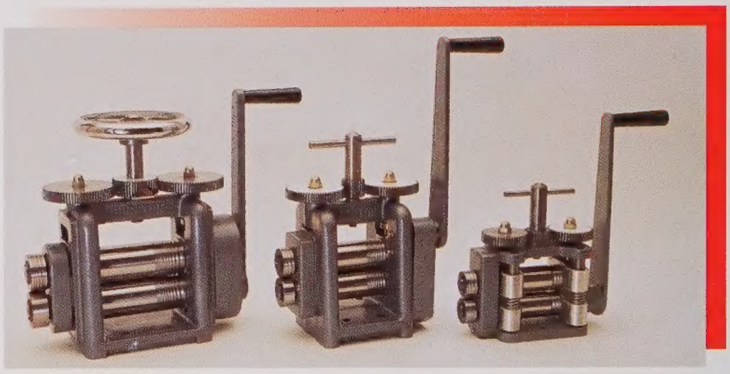

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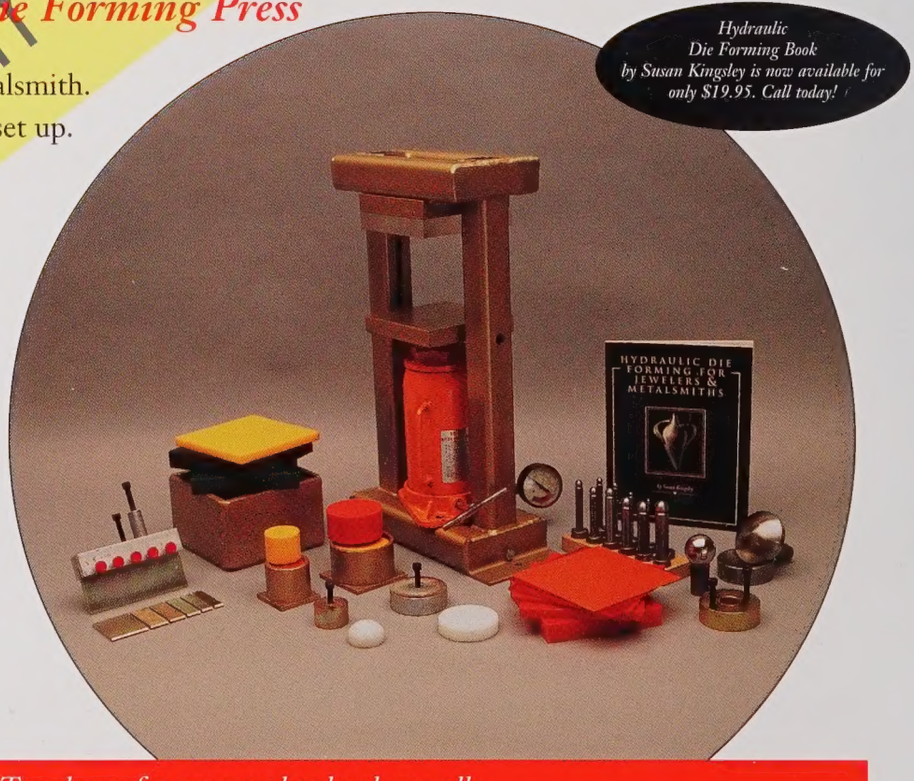

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